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学園

— GAKUEN KINO —

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Chapter 1: *Kino's Refreshing Arrival!*

~Here Comes Kino~

(Part 1)

It was morning.

No matter how you looked at it, it was morning. The bright sun had already climbed quite high in the eastern sky, warming the summer ground.

A single structure stood boldly in the midst of a viridian forest. In the centre was a cylindrical building, sandwiched in between a pair of rectangular buildings that rather resembled bland apartments.

In one of these buildings was a certain room. You couldn't say it was particularly spacious, but it contained all the basic necessities, like a desk, dresser, and a bed. It was almost like a school dormitory in that everything was very standard--in fact, it *was* a school dormitory.

On the desk were a few notebooks and textbooks, as well as the kind of stationery that a male student could never use without being teased by his classmates. A sailor uniform hung in front of the dresser. And by that, I don't mean the *actual* sailor uniforms worn by muscled navy officers. It was just a summer sailor uniform worn by schoolgirls.

The owner of said uniform was lying on the bed.

A frugal mattress lay on the wooden frame in the corner.

The girl was asleep, her head turned away. She was covered with a

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thin blanket that was plastered with cutesy firearms company logos like "Heckler & Koch", "Colt", and "Smith & Wesson". It was not the kind of blanket most people would know where to acquire. The lavender pyjamas she wore were covered in comical renderings of quotes like, "Open fire!", "Deploy the machine guns", and "Contact the artillery corps!". They were the kind of pyjamas that even those well-versed in the field would not know where to acquire.

She was perhaps in her mid-teens. Her short black hair currently stood up on ends like a bird's nest. Eyes closed, mouth half-opened, and breathing quietly, the girl slumbered peacefully under the sunlight filtering through the green curtains.

"Hey! How much longer are you planning to sleep? Wakeupwakeupwakeup! Wake up!"

Someone's voice rang through the room. Of course, it wasn't the girl's voice. Nor was it the precise alarm clock, nor was it the ringing of a phone. It was the voice of a young boy.

"Wake up! Wake up!"

Who in the world could this voice belong to? There was no one else in this room.

"Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!"

The voice began shouting orders, even louder than before.

"Ahhhh... I can't eat anymore... but I wanna eat... but it's all about resolve... yeah, I have a separate stomach for all that..."

The girl muttered these strange things, and went right back to sleep.



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"I don't believe this..." Complained the voice. And...

"Beep beep! Beep beep! Beep beep!"

It began to imitate a beeping alarm as loudly as possible. After 20 seconds of sustained beeping, the girl frowned in annoyance.

"Beep beep! Beep beep! Beep beep!"

The girl sleepily reached out for the digital alarm clock at her bedside. Of course, the beeping was not coming from the alarm clock. It had been set at exactly the time she needed to wake up. But the girl mercilessly pounded her fist into the clock. Its plastic frame rattled from the shock.

The girl retracted her hand and fell back into sleep. She breathed out peacefully.

"Heeeeeeey! Beep beep! Beep beep! Beep beep! ...This is getting tiring... Beep beep! BEEEEEEEEEP BEEEEEEEEEP!!!"

The desperate voice once again rang out throughout the room.

"Hmmm?"

The girl sat up, eyes still half-closed. She reached back for her alarm clock to check the time.

8:25.

That was the time displayed on the screen. It was a very real number.

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It took the girl 3 seconds to process all of this. Her eyes opened wide. The words tumbled out of her mouth.

"Ah... I-I-I..." She took a breath.

"I'm late!" She screamed.

The movements that followed were almost too fast to follow. She pulled off the blankets and ran into the bathroom in her pyjamas. She returned at lightspeed and complained to the empty room.

"Why didn't you wake me up?!"

The voice, whose hard work had been rewarded, (understandably) replied angrily.

"That's just what I've been doing all morning!"

"Argh... You know I can never wake up if all you do is yell. You should have beaten me awake!

"As if that's even possible." The voice replied.

"Ohhhh, why does this have to happen every day? In my next life, I hope I'll be the kind of person who can wake up easily even at the crack of dawn." The girl muttered, and quickly began to change, taking clothes off, putting clothes on, getting into the sailor uniform, and finally smoothing down her messy hair. The few rebellious strands were--

"Haaaaah!"

pushed down with spirit.



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She grabbed her light beige bag and her keys. The moment she was about to dash out the door, however, the voice spoke up again.

"Hey! Don't leave me behind again!"

"Oh, sorry!"

The girl hurried back and grabbed a small phone strap lying on the desk. It had a simple design, made with green leather and yellow metallic decorations. Because she didn't have a cell phone, there was a key (that wasn't her room key) hanging from the strap.

"Thanks."

Extraordinarily enough, the disembodied voice had been coming from this phone strap the whole time.

The girl moved over to the door and reached out for her western belt. It was by the door so she wouldn't forget. She put it around her waist and secured the buckle. There were several green pouches hanging from the belt. Over her right thigh there was a brown leather holster holding a revolver. Naturally, it was just a model gun that did not go against any firearms restrictions. But that was besides the point that most girls did not carry around such things, model gun or not. But thinking too much about things like this would slow down the pace of the story, so please don't worry about it too much.

The girl opened the door with incredible force and ran out of her room. The sound of the door closing and being locked echoed down the hallway, as well as the voices of the two people(?) running down the hallway.

"I'm definitely late, Hermes! It's all your fault!"

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"Why is it my fault? You're the one who slept in, Kino!"

And so the high school student "Kino" and her mysterious cell phone strap "Hermes" noisily began their day.

A single student ran furiously uphill towards the school gate under the clear summer skies and the shower of flower petals.

It was the very sailor-clad girl that had very recently run out of the deserted dormitories. As a side note, the security guard cheerily commented to her, "Haha, you're always late for class every day even though you're running at mach speed. Good luck!"

The girl's name was Kino. She was in her first year of high school in this institution. This academy was divided into the high school and junior high school divisions, and was co-ed. About half the students lived in the dorms, and the other half commuted by school bus.

"I just might make it this time!"

Cruelly enough, the moment the holster-and-pouch-clad Kino shouted these words, the school bell began to toll. There were still hundreds of meters between Kino and the school on the green hill. It was quite a steep climb at that. This was a great source of complaint for the students who had to travel to and from the dormitory cafeterias for lunch every day.



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"I guess I'm late again..."

"Late as usual, huh? You reap what you sow."

The dejected Kino and the cell phone strap Hermes sighed in unison.

Kino trudged towards the school mournfully. Her bag, her holster, and her pouches, and even her scarf and uniform suddenly felt very heavy.

"Kino? Aren't you going to run?"

"Nah, I'm late anyway. I might as well wait for first period to finish..."

"No motivation, huh? I don't care about school, but I hope you'll be a bit more enthusiastic for the 'Battles'." Said Hermes. It was really out of nowhere. Kino continued to toil up the hill and asked,

"'Battles', huh? Is all that really true?"

Hermes got a little angry over that.

"You don't believe me? Then how do you explain the talking cell phone strap? If this wasn't true, you'd be just some crazy human talking to herself."

"I guess... but what do you expect me to do, suddenly saying that I have to 'become a warrior of justice and battle the demons who have taken up residence in the school'?" Kino asked wearily, wiping the sweat on her brow with a handkerchief.

"Don't worry, Kino. Right now, your original battle prowess and

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memories have been sealed away to allow you to have a normal student life. Once danger arrives, you can transform into a warrior of justice and fight the evil armies that plot to take over the universe! After all, you're the hero chosen by the Goddess herself!" Said Hermes, in a completely different tone. Saying something like this was the kind of thing that could get an adult's head checked out.

Kino looked up at the blue skies over the green hill and muttered,

"I just don't think I have that kind of power."

"You'll know when the time comes."

"I don't really want that time to come. I just want to live a normal school life."

"Even though you're always late for school?"

"Shush."

Eventually they reached the point where the school building and the gates were visible. The iron gates were shut tightly. Of course, there was a side door for pedestrian use.

Kino frowned.

"Ack... This isn't good."

Four students stood there. They wore sailor and white standing-collar (summer uniforms) uniforms. They all wore armbands that read "Student Council Special Duty Team". It was the "Unusually Energetic Student Council that everyone wants to join", "The Team That Makes Delinquents Wet Their Pants Club"'s Special Duty



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Team's Uniform Regulation Division. They didn't check every day, but it seemed that they had picked today to do spot checks outside the gate.

"Why today... of all days...?" Asked Kino, who got to class on time yesterday.

The Council members were like predators stalking their prey. Kino slowly approached the gates and asked Hermes,

"Oh right! Could I just transform now and get rid of those four...?"

Hermes ignored her. Except for the whole 'talking-cellphone strap' thing it seems like he actually had some sense.

"Hey you! We need to see your student ID!" Ordered a sharp-eyed second-year girl.

"..."

Kino, who had given up on getting rid of the Council, dejectedly took out her ID from her bag. A snake-faced third-year boy snatched it and compared Kino to her picture.

Kino glared at the student, a stark contrast to the prim expression worn by the girl in the photograph.

The boy was about to say something, but stopped himself. He returned the ID and asked accusingly.

"Kino, High school division, first year, class _____. Tell us. How many times were you late this term?"

The teachers recorded student tardiness rates and not the Council, so Kino's lateness record really has nothing to do with these guys.

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In other words, they're just being douchebags. If a student answered, they would retort with, "That's quite a lot, isn't it?" or "are you lying to us?". If a student didn't answer, they would just bully them, saying "So many times that you can't even keep track, huh?".

"I'm not quite sure... But It's definitely less than 200,004,500 times." Kino replied with a straight face. The 4-against-1 pressure intensified.

"We'll be checking your belongings for contraband!" The sharp-eyed girl and another female student approached Kino. Kino frowned again, but she couldn't do anything about it since same-gendered council members had the right to search student belongings.

The two students dug through Kino's bag.

"Doesn't look like there's anything in here."

Although it was only right that they praise Kino for following the rules, they returned the bag with oddly disappointed expressions on their faces.

"Can I go in now?" Kino asked. She was about to go in when she heard no answer, but another council member stopped her.

"Wait!"

It was another second-year boy. He pointed to Kino's waist.

"That's been bothering me for a while now."

Hermes, who had been hanging from Kino's belt, thought to



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himself, 'Yeah, it's definitely a little weird to carry around a model gun.'

"Aren't those pouches against uniform regulations?"

'Huh? those pouches?!' Hermes thought.

Kino glared and replied rebelliously.

"Um... I've never heard of a rule like that before. What's it to you?"

This really pissed off the Council members. They surrounded Kino and approached slowly with the intent of finding something, anything against school rules. Eight hands reached for the pouches on Kino's waist. Kino braced herself defiantly.

"Hey, what do you think you're doing?"

If these students didn't have Student Council Armbands, this could practically count as a crime scene. Scary, huh? Don't try this at home, kids. Looks like power really does corrupt.

Suddenly,

"Stop it."

A clear voice rang out at the school entrance. The four Council members flinched at once and looked in the direction of the voice. Kino followed their gaze out of offhand curiosity.

A breeze.

He was a tidy-looking young man with a melancholy look in his

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eyes. His slightly long black hair danced in the wind. His pristine white uniform was topped by a single katana strapped to the belt.

He walked over quietly, gaze unwavering. The sound of his every step rang out clearly. The morning sun shone off the katana. A dove flew past him. In slow motion, at that.

"A-ah-Shizu-" One of the girls stammered in shock, and, blushing, called out his name.

"Shizu-senpai..."

His name was Shizu. A third-year in the academy's high school division. As a side note, there is a rumour that he'd been held back about 5 years and is actually over 20 years old. Of course, this is only a rumour.

With his handsome good looks, elegance, top-of-the-class academics, and athletic skills, Shizu was the most famous student in the entire school, bar none.

A princely figure that monopolized all female attention in the school, his disinterest in dating and his gentlemanly grace in all necessary interactions (in-class science labs, for example) only served to increase his popularity and his fantastic awesomeness... and I'm forgetting where all this is going, but anyway, he's a really extraordinary guy.

He didn't join any clubs, and was always on his own. A lot of people though he was a lonely sort of guy who didn't even have male friends, let alone female ones, but they stayed mum on that topic in fear for how their social lives could be ruined if they said anything like that. Shizu was that kind of a guy.



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His trademark was the katana at his side. Nicknames include "The Katana Nobleman", "Prince Shizu (used mostly by girls)", "The Swordfighter Man", and "Prettyboy Samurai (used only by guys)".

Shizu approached the five students silently with charismatic elegance. The male students took a step back as if faced with a predator, and the female students stood rooted to the spot as if in a trance.

Shizu stopped and looked directly at Kino. He was much taller than her, so he was technically looking down at her, but there was nothing overpowering about his gaze.

"..."

"..."

Both Kino and Shizu were silent. They stared at each other for about 3 seconds. Veins started popping on the Student Council girls' foreheads.

Shizu looked forward again. He adjusted the katana with his left hand and began walking. The Student Council members got out of his way.

Paying no attention to the hypnotized gazes of adoration and the antagonistic glares of defeat and envy, Shizu passed by them, dignified, and headed for the school.

Only once he had passed out of sight did the Student Council members let out a breath. Looking at their staring into the newly paved road, one would wonder where all of their previous

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aggression had gone. Kino ran towards the school building without a care.

"That was close. I've heard about that guy, but it's all about the looks, huh? Not that I think he's a bad guy or anything."

Hermes replied, "Yeah. But you know, that guy--"

"Yeah, him too." Kino nodded gravely. She and Hermes said in unison,

"Isn't he late?"

"He's late."

Let's move back a bit in time.

"I am the Goddess of this planet." Said the self-proclaimed Goddess. Wait, I guess it'd be more accurate for her to call herself a self-proclaimed Goddess.

She was beautiful. Dressed head-to-toe in glamorous clothing and accessories, with a serene halo of light shining from behind her, she did sort of resemble a Goddess. If you looked closely, her floating feet were also quite Goddess-like. Not only that, the entire space consisted of nothing but blue ground and yellow skies. The kind of mystical, Goddess-made space that could not exist in real life.



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Standing in front of the Goddess were two humans and a motorrad.

One of the humans was Kino. She wore a black jacket and a brown overcoat, a hat that covered the ears, and a pair of goggles. Around her waist was a thick belt. Holstered at her right was the Legendary Persuader "Big Cannon ~ Shining Iron Demon Destroyer". Of course, in appearance it was no different from Kino's original "Cannon".

The other person was Shizu. He wore a green sweater that was layered at the shoulders and elbows. At his side was a cheap katana, one of the many he carried around in a black bag, as a replacement for his beloved sword that was broken into five pieces during his battle against Riku, who turned out to have been a spy of the Galactic Overlord.

The motorrad was Hermes. He had shifted from spaceship mode to his usual two-wheeler form, complete with luggage. He stood on his centre stand.

The two people and the motorrad had left their home planet and travelled to the depths of outer space in order to defeat the Galactic Overlord. (Please refer to "Kino's Journey - The Beautiful World-" Volumes 20~134: 'The Space Arc - Chapter of Travels', 'Stock Market Arc - Trap', 'Stock Market Arc - Revenge', and 'The Space Arc Part 2 - Into the Sea of Stars')

The Goddess slowly spread her arms.

"I have something very very important to ask of you. This planet is in grave-- are you listening to me?"

The two people and the motorrad were conversing among

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themselves in the Goddess's presence. It seemed as though they had no interest.

"Hey!" The Goddess shouted with a hint of indignation. Kino and Shizu looked up at her, annoyed.

"I'm afraid we've only stopped by this planet to rest and stock up on supplies. There's nothing we can do for you, as we'll be leaving soon."

The Goddess was shocked. She cast down her eyes.

"You are the true heroes destined to fight against the Galactic Overlord's schemes to take over the universe. Your actions are known throughout the universe! How could you turn me down like this? This small planet is under constant assault from the Overlord's minions--"

The two people and the motorrad had stopped listening to the Goddess from around "...true heroes destined...". They had instead moved on from their discussion about supplies to a heated debate, with Kino arguing that they should stock up on more meat than fish, and Shizu arguing that fish was a better choice.

--our last hope. Because I lack power... all I can do is watch from afar and grieve for them. That's why I have chosen you for your prowess in battle and--"

Kino used the Goddess's speech as background music to her argument that meat was more likely to retain its original taste even after defrosting, and that there was a wider range of meals that could be cooked with it. Shizu acknowledged Kino's points, but argued that fish was rich in DHA, a substance not found in meats, which helps in preventing Alzheimer's. Hermes quipped that he



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didn't care what they stocked up on, as long as they didn't exceed the maximum load like last time.

"Hey!"

The Goddess was furious.

"I admit this is a pretty backwater planet, but how dare you ignore a Goddess like this?!"

There was a flash of light and a loud rumble, as befitting a Goddess's rage. The two people glanced at the Goddess, as if tired of having to listen to her. And that was it. They soon agreed to follow Shizu's suggestion of a 2:3 ratio of meat and fish.

"To think... I'd be treated like this... you're horrible!" The Goddess sniffled. Four seconds later, she was all-out crying like a lost child. Kino and Shizu looked at her, annoyed. Hermes mumbled, "Ah, she's bowling her eyes out."

Kino said nothing. Shizu chimed in instead.

"Don't you mean, 'bawling'?"

"Yeah, that's right! You're definitely a smart one, unlike Kino. Not surprising, considering you used to be a prince--ow!"

Kino, having given Hermes a good kick, took the handles and folded the stand. She turned her back on the weeping Goddess without a care.

"Mackerel and Cod would be best, I think." Said Shizu, following Kino.

All of a sudden, the two stopped instantly. They neither blinked nor breathed, as if they were frozen to the spot.

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"Hmph! That's what you get for ignoring a Goddess." Said the Goddess, wiping her tears with a handkerchief. She rambled on at length about the failing belief in Gods, the shortcomings of modern education, and about wanting to see her parents again. Talking into thin air like that really made her look pompous.

"I will have you help us, whether you like it or not. The Overlord's minions have infiltrated the schools set up by the humans of this planet in order to taint bright young minds with evil. You two must go undercover as students and defend against these minions vigilantly. I will alter your characterizations so as to avoid suspicion and change your memories in order to avoid mental dissonance."

"Got it. But what about me?"

"Aaaack!"

The question was posed by Hermes. The shocked Goddess pointed a shaking hand at the motorrad, which was not frozen (though you couldn't tell just by looking).

"H-how? I stopped your time!"

"I guess motorrads are immune." Hermes replied nonchalantly. Maybe that really hurt the Goddess's pride. She glared at Hermes.

"Well, I don't need you anymore! I'll turn you into scrap metal!"

"Scrap doesn't sound too good." Hermes said matter-of-factly. "I'd prefer to be a strap instead."



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Kino, having entered class between homeroom and first period, took morning classes as usual. Hermes, having nothing to do, counted the number of times Kino's stomach growled (9 times) and the number of times others could hear her stomach growl (5 times).

Fourth period ended 10 minutes early thanks to the teacher.

"Other classes are still going on, so take care not to disturb them." Said the teacher while leaving, and within 3 seconds anarchy had descended upon the classroom.

Kino took advantage of the chaos and left the classroom faster than an Olympic sprinter--she put on her red 4th year indoor shoes(by that it means 4th year in the academy--first year of high school) and raced down the hill towards the student cafeteria at the dormitories.

The cafeteria was still empty.

"This is bliss~. Thanks for the meal." Kino muttered, putting her hands together, and began to eat her supersized cold noodles.

And she finished it all. Quick as ever.

Kino left the cafeteria before it was crowded with other students. In one hand she held a plastic bag from the cafeteria shop, and in the other she held an orange juice box with a straw sticking out the top. She walked over to the main school building.

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"The weather's so nice today." Said Kino, looking up at the clear sky with a smile on her face. Since there was no one else around, Hermes voiced his agreement from the belt.

Kino, having eaten an early lunch thanks to class finishing early, mumbled to herself,

"Lunchtime is so rellakthing~"

Her pronunciation was a little off because she was holding a straw with her teeth, but I'm sure you can all figure out what she was saying. Just for reference, it was "Lunchtime is so un-lacking".¹

"The classroom's not that comfortable, and I can't bring food into the library... where should I go, Hermes?"

"I get so bored when other people are around because I have to keep quiet." Hermes complained. Kino briefly fell into thought.

Struck by a sudden burst of inspiration, she spoke--

"In that case..."

The school building was an L-shaped, four-storey structure.

¹ From translator's notes on Korean printing:

The original wordplay sets up "[Lunchtime is so] relaxing (*hima da na*)", with Kino pronouncing it as "*Hiha ha na*" due to the straw in her mouth. The narration then subverts the set-up, claiming that Kino was actually saying "*Higanbana*", a type of flower known as the cluster amaryllis. It's *supposed* to be out of left field.



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Occasionally it was mistaken for a 3-story building because it was built on a slope with the entrance on the second floor, but let's set that aside for now.

On the long side of the L-shaped building was an accessible rooftop. It wasn't a very popular hangout among students, however.

Power lines stretched into the distance, where the green hills and woods faded into the landscape. In the east were the bright red roofs of a newly developed neighbourhood.

The view was decent, but few students frequented this location. Part of the reason might have been that the rooftop would get very slippery after it rained--but it wasn't the main cause.

"It's because everyone's allowed to go onto the roof. I bet if they made it against the rules, people would be flocking onto the rooftop." Hermes said to Kino as they climbed the stairs from the fourth floor to the roof. Kino quietly scolded Hermes for talking because someone might hear him.

Kino was almost at the top of the stairs, within sight of the metal doors to the rooftop, when something caught her eye.

"Huh? Is someone out there?"

Kino was slightly disappointed by the fact that one of the doors was wide open. After all, she wouldn't be able to relax and enjoy her snack while talking to Hermes if someone else was there.

She wasn't doing anything bad by any means, but Kino tiptoed past the supply cabinet and approached the doors. She poked her head out beside the closed door and looked around, blinking her

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wide eyes. The wind blowing over her face shook her messy black hair.

"I guess you could say that."

Kino heard a voice. It was as clear as ever, and because it was carried over by the wind, it sounded a lot closer to Kino than the speaker actually was. Kino momentarily flinched.

Two people stood beside the railings on the edge of the rooftop, about 10 meters from the doors.

One of them was a girl, wearing the same uniform as Kino. Her long, shimmering hair fluttered in the breeze. Her green indoor shoes indicated that she was in the year above Kino. Perhaps as an accessory for the season, there was a small sticker of a bamboo tree and a wish tag attached to the side of her right shoe. Kino wouldn't know this, but it was a kind of charm among girls--the wish would come true when the sticker fell off on its own.

The other person was a male student with a katana at his side. For reference, there is only one student in this school who typically carries around a sword. One person is enough.

No one else was around. The girl looked up at Shizu tearfully and asked desperately, "But why? Ever since my first day at this school, I..."

Kino could get the gist of the situation. Popular Shizu was on the receiving end of a desperate love confession from a younger student.

Shizu himself didn't seem too annoyed by her, but he didn't look very sympathetic, either. Despite his silence, one could tell that he



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considered the conversation over and wanted the girl to leave him alone.

The girl and Shizu were silent for the next five seconds.

"I apologize, but I have no time for such things." Shizu blurted out. This was the worst possible timing for such words. Perhaps the Katana Man was cursed with misfortune.

What Shizu meant was, 'I have no time for relationships'. It was, in other words, rejecting the point of the conversation. However, the girl couldn't just accept this so easily. After all, Shizu's words had come just as she worked up the courage to tell him something. What she planned to tell him was, of course, 'Please listen to me one more time'. Understandably, the shock she received was immense.

"!"

She froze on the spot in shock. By the time she let out her breath, tears were flowing from her eyes.

Shizu seemed to be a little surprised by this, but he did not try to resolve the situation or console the girl. He merely stood there.

The girl turned around and made a run for the door. That is, straight towards the wide-eyed peeper Kino. On an additional note, Kino was holding Hermes up to the door so he could get a good look as well.

"!"

Kino tried to quickly take cover beneath the stairs.

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"Hide behind over there." Hermes instructed Kino, who figured out that there wasn't enough time to hide under the stairs. She hid behind the supply cabinet as Hermes told her.

The rejected girl didn't notice Kino as she flew down the stairs in tears.

"That was close..." Kino muttered, as she left her hiding place to take one more look down the stairs. After confirming that no one was there, Kino approached the doors again and looked out at the rooftop. The Katana Man hadn't moved from where he stood earlier.

"I guess this place is out." Kino mumbled, but as soon as she said this--

"I'll be leaving soon." Answered Shizu's clear voice. Shizu himself turned around.

"Pay me no mind," he said. Kino was a little surprised, but she came out to the rooftop, bag of snacks in hand. After all, mulling things over wouldn't do her any good. Seeing her, Shizu's emotionless face turned into a pensive one.

"You're from this morning..."

Kino walked up to Shizu and stood at the same place as the girl who had just received the biggest shock of her life. She first greeted him.

Shizu replied with an empty expression, "I'm sorry you had to see that. However, it is not very courteous to spy on people." It seemed Shizu was surprisingly embarrassed about the whole thing.



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"You're pretty popular, aren'tcha?" Hermes asked loudly. A flustered Kino tightly grasped the cell phone strap at her waist, but that only served to make her look like a strange girl who just touched her own waist.

"What was that...?"

"N-n-n-n-n-nothing!" Kino stuttered, squeezing the cell phone strap as hard as she could.

"Was it you?"

"N-n-n-n-n-no, I-I-I-I-just-I-just..."

"Ijust?"

"No, well you see, it m-m-m-might be me! O-o-o-o-or maybe it might not have been!"

"Hm? Anyway, calm down." Said Shizu, as he took in his surroundings again. Kino, face covered in sweat, turned her back to him, crouched over, and whispered to Hermes angrily.

"W-w-w-w-what were you thinking?!"

"Oh, sorry. I just blurted it out." Hermes responded quietly. He didn't sound the least bit apologetic.

"He probably thought *I* was the one who just said that! What if he thinks I'm a weirdo?"

"Well, don't worry about that."

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"Why not?" Kino asked. Hermes' answer came quickly.

"Because he probably already thinks that."

Kino had a smile on her face. It was icy. She softly whispered to Hermes, "How far into the summer skies do you think I can throw this tiny cell phone strap?"

"Sorry, I won't do it again. I promise."

Kino took a deep breath and stood up beside Shizu.

Shizu glanced at her and half-mumbled, "As you can see, this is the kind of person I am. I don't understand the feelings of the people who ask out someone so inelegant like me."

Kino briefly struggled for words, before shutting up altogether. She didn't know how to react.

A moment later, as if struck by inspiration, Kino dug through the plastic bag she was carrying and took out a small melon bread. She had bought it not too long ago from the cafeteria shop to eat for dessert. She handed one of the two to Shizu.

"Want it?"

"..."

Shizu looked at Kino in confusion. Just as she began to think, 'Did I do something wrong?' and began to take the bread back, Shizu reached out and took the melon bread.

"Thanks. I appreciate it."



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The two stood against the railings, quietly eating their melon bread and staring out into the distance. The sight of the Holster Girl and the Katana Man standing side-by-side, eating melon bread, was a strange one to be sure, but thankfully no one was watching.

After she finished her bread, Kino said to Shizu, "Thank you for this morning."

"Hmm? Oh, don't worry about it. I'm not too fond of the Student Council myself."

"They almost got their hands on the pouches, but you saved me just in time," said Kino.

Shizu glanced at the pouches and asked, "I've actually been quite curious since this morning. What's in there? Of course, you're not obligated to tell me."

"This? My grandma back in the countryside gave it to me as a good luck charm before I started school here. She said it's a charm that was passed down through generations, and that I shouldn't open it unless I'm in danger." Kino answered honestly.

Shizu didn't make fun of her for having such a strange lucky charm.

"A grandmother, huh? I'm somewhat envious," he said, "I never knew my own grandmother. She passed away not long before I was born. That's why I hold a deep respect for grandmothers."

"I see. I haven't seen my grandma since I started school."

Shizu asked Kino about her grandmother.

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"She's a great person. I'm really proud to be her granddaughter. She's good at everything and proud of her work. She challenged herself in a lot of ways when she was younger and came out stronger for it. She joined the special forces in the army and worked behind the scenes to control a country's revolutionary war, started a spy academy, and sniped a legendary 2-km shot from across a canyon. She's practically a local celebrity."

Shizu nodded understandingly. Is it even legal to understand all of that without asking a few questions?

Kino smiled and continued, "next time I see her, I'm going to tell grandma about today as as a souvenir."

Shizu's expression darkened as he looked at Kino's smiling face. Put nicely, it was an expression of holding back his melancholy-- put badly, he was just a gloomy, angsty young man.

"You... laugh so sincerely." Shizu suddenly whispered.

"Huh?" Kino asked, with more force than she intended.

"Sorry. I wasn't looking down on you or making fun of you. I just felt that you could truly enjoy the good things in life and laugh about them sincerely."

"What about you, senpai?"

"Me? I wonder... I haven't been able to truly laugh... for a very long time," Shizu spoke, as he took out a pocket watch from his uniform pocket. It was a meticulously crafted piece, and judging from the fact that Shizu did not open the cover, he was looking not at the time, but at the watch itself.



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"I wonder how long it's been..." Shizu mumbled, and he put the pocket watch back and went back to gazing at their surroundings.

"Sometimes I wonder."

Kino leaned lightly against the railing, beside Shizu. She glanced up at his face every now and then.

"About what?"

Shizu spoke, looking straight into the distance.

"Maybe I'm not really the real me'."

"The real you?"

"That's right. Sometimes I find myself thinking that my peaceful life as a normal high school student is just a dream I'm living through... that maybe the real me is living a harsher life, fighting for my survival, consumed by revenge. That maybe the real me is a pitiful man who knows nothing but skills that bring harm to others."

"Hmmm..."

"Maybe that's why I can't bring myself to enjoy these blessed moments..."

It was only after finishing his monologue that Shizu noticed the girl beside him staring up at him. He waved his hand with a hint of anxiety.

"Sorry for saying such strange things. Forget I said anything."

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Kino looked up at Shizu and said, "senpai, this is what I think."

"Hm?"

"No matter what kind of life you're living, as long as you feel good about yourself, call that the 'good you'! Let the 'other you' worry about his own problems."

"Ah. I see."

"I think you should start with what you can and enjoy yourself."
Kino smiled.

"..."

Shizu stared at Kino. Kino, feeling like she said something wrong, deflated.

"...I'm sorry, senpai. I shouldn't be ordering you around like this..."

"No, I found it very helpful. 'Start with what I can', huh?"

The smile returned to Kino's face.

"First thing's first, Shizu-senpai."

"What would that be?" Shizu asked.

Kino put up her index finger in front of his face and uttered, "You should learn to let girls down more gently when they confess!"

".... Hahaha!"



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Seeing Shizu's laughter, Kino replied, "See? You can do it!"

"..."

Shizu briefly fell into thought. Then he recalled what he said earlier to Kino.

The two laughed without a care on the deserted rooftop.

Anyway, what happened to the girl who Shizu turned down? The one that ran down the stairs with tears in her eyes?

She was running recklessly down the stairs, holding the railings, but because she was blinded by her own tears she completely missed the floor of her classroom and ended up on the landing of the semi-basement floor.

When she realized her mistake, the girl smiled at her own carelessness, but started sobbing again after realizing why she was there in the first place.

The semi-basement landing had nothing but the door to the mechanical room for the school's heating systems. Of course, the door was locked. No one came to this place because it was so dark—a place out of sight of most students. Through the window higher



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up in the wall, the girl could see a sky so blue it looked like it was mocking her.

And she cried. What were those last four years pining for him all for? She knew she didn't have much of a chance, but she at least expected him to let her down more gently. She wanted to be strong and leave with a positive impression. Maybe he would have remembered her fondly, and he might have handed her his phone number and address on graduation day, with an "Actually, I...".

Were all her dreams for nothing? No, maybe this was still the night before she decided to confess, and she was lying in bed, having a nightmare. Today was supposed to be the fated day, so why wouldn't the alarm go off?

The girl's head was filled with all kinds of thoughts. It was a complete mess.

"Do you hate him?" Asked a suspicious, elderly voice. Of course, the girl was the only one there.

"...?"

Just as she raised her tear-and-snot-covered face--

"Do you hate him?" The voice asked again. The girl snapped out of her confusion in surprise and looked around.

"Who's there?"

"That is of no importance. What matters, however, is the fact that you hate that man."

Just as she was about to draw breath and say, "That's not true!"--



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"Look, through that window," the voice started. The girl, confused, looked out the window. She could see the rooftop railings, and...

"!"

There was a small shadow leaning against the railing. It was unmistakably Shizu-senpai, who had so coldly rejected her. Beside him was a smaller shadow.

It looked like a short-haired girl. She had never seen the girl before.

The girl was standing right up close to Shizu-senpai. Their shadows overlapped together.

"No!"

To her, it looked like they were standing close and kissing.

"See? Now do you understand why you were rejected?" Asked the mystery voice. The girl stood, frozen to the spot, shaking and covering her face. The fact that there could never logically be a way to see the rooftop from this window never occurred to the girl in her current state.

"It seems your beloved senpai prefers girls like that." The voice added condescendingly. The girl dropped her head. Her long hair covered her face. She stood alone in the dark semi-basement landing like a ghost.

"Are you just going to stand around here in defeat while they kiss under the beautiful blue skies?" The voice sounded almost like it was enveloping the girl.

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Splash. A teardrop fell from her face and onto the ground. The first, the second, the third... and on.

After the tears had passed, the voice asked her--

"Do you hate that girl?"

"Wh...at...?"

"Do you hate that girl who's taken away your beloved senpai?"

"..."

"Or is it that covertly perverted samurai cuddling with your kohai the one you hate?"

"What...?"

She raised her head.

"I see, so you hate them both--in fact, you must hate the entire world."

"No--that's... not true..." she shook her head. However, the voice was relentless.

"Your words deny it, but you've gone through quite a few dot-dot-dots in the past little while."

"What...? Dot-dot-dots...?"

"Those things, up there↑. You've been fading the ends of your



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sentences for a while now. You hate your beloved senpai enough to want to kill him. You want that girl to die with the world."

"No... I don't..."

"You continue to deny it, but your heart wants to push them off the rooftop right now. I understand how you feel."

Despite her trepidation, the girl had to ask--

"Who... who are you?"

The voice answered jovially, as if it had been waiting for the question.

"I have just the perfect product for you! Let me introduce to you our latest item!"

"A salesman?"

Nope.

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Chapter 1: *Kino's Refreshing Arrival!*

~Here Comes Kino~

(Part 2)

Fifth Period.

In a certain first-year high school classroom, a certain girl was sleeping with her face plastered against her desk.

"I don't believe this," complained the phone strap hanging from her waist.

The girl was wearing a belt. Attached to it were several small pouches and a holster with a model gun. For reference, there is only one student (rest is omitted). One person is (rest is omitted).

She had a very satisfied look on her face. The middle-aged teacher at the front ignored her and continued to read off the textbook.

In a certain second-year high school classroom, a certain girl's seat was empty. It was most definitely occupied before lunchtime, and the student wasn't one to skip classes. Her friend was contemplating whether or not to go to the nurse's office to see if she was there.

And the occupant of that seat was--

"I hate them... I hate them all..."



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muttering to herself in the deserted semi-basement landing, turning over a small bottle in her right hand. It was filled with an extremely suspicious-looking neon-green liquid.

She downed it all in one go.

The sound of the bottle shattering against the floor echoed through the landing, but no one would ever hear it.

In a certain third-year high school classroom, a student in a white uniform carrying a katana easily answered the teacher's questions while hoarding the class's attention to himself. For reference, (rest omitted). One person (rest omitted).

All of a sudden--

"...!"

he stopped in the middle of his answer, as if something more pressing had caught his attention. He looked up at the ceiling.

Ten seconds of silence. Just as the teacher was about to tell him to sit down if he didn't know the answer--just as the other students were being surprised that Shizu was having trouble with an answer--

The building shook. Everyone thought, 'An earthquake?', but the sounds of explosions followed soon after.

As screams filled the classroom, Shizu muttered,

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"It's here."

"Kino! Wake up! Kino!" Hermes shouted. Kino was still sprawled out over her desk.

As a side note, the classroom had been emptied out already. The doors were wide open, the desks were scattered, and textbooks and notebooks were strewn across the floor. Everyone had already evacuated because of the sustained explosions and the shaking of the building. Voices yelling "This way!" and "Hurry!" rang out from the hallways, courtesy of students who were a little late in escaping.

"Wake up! The enemy's finally here! Kino! You have to transform and fight!"

"Ughhh... yeah..." Kino mumbled, her face still against the desk.

"You awake?"

"I said I can keep eating... bring more... I have a separate stomach for them... Pft... meat dumplings..."

She was just talking in her sleep.

"Beep beep beep beep! Beep beep beep beep! Beep beep beep beep!"

As Hermes tried to awaken Kino in vain, a monster rampaged through the school.

It was humanoid in shape, but about 3 meters tall, with rough grey and brown skin. It was most definitely a monster. The monster



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walked through the halls, shattering windows with its large arms. It was hunching, but the lights and even the ceiling were destroyed as its head passed through. The monster occasionally breathed fire, which caused the explosions that shook the building.

On the first floor lobby, it breathed fire upon a bronze statue of the founder of the school, shattering it. With its claws, the monster ripped apart an oil painting labelled "Prefectural Art Contest Second Place". It growled, and let out a huge roar.

"Eeeek!" Someone screamed softly.

"You idiot! It'll hear you!" Someone scolded, in an even louder voice than the scream. I wonder which one is really the idiot?

The monster turned towards the direction of the voice--the office beside the lobby.

"I don't believe this! What kind of transforming hero sleeps through something like this?!" Hermes complained. Kino, who had finally succumbed to Hermes' efforts (although upon waking, she had shouted at Hermes, "You woke me up from my Imperial Chinese Gourmet Full-Course Meal!"), was running through the halls in search of the monster. Hermes still hung from Kino's belt.

There was a sharp scream from a female student. Hermes pointed Kino in the right direction with a "That way!", but Kino stopped in her tracks.

"Man, do I really have to do this?"

"I'm going to get angry if you don't."

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"But, normal high school girls don't fight monsters." Kino whined.

"Normal high school girls don't sleep in class, drooling over an Imperial Chinese Gourmet Full-Course Meal in her dreams."

"Ack."

"Anyway, you have to fight! What would your grandma back home think if you keep hesitating like this?" Hermes scolded Kino. Kino reluctantly headed towards the direction of the scream.

"My hair won't stay down." Kino's bangs were standing up in odd directions because she slept at her desk. "Can I just drop by the washroom for a sec?"

"Never mind that, you have to hurry!"

The scream was very brief, but Kino could easily tell that it came from the first floor lobby. The halls along the way were a complete mess, looking almost like they had been bombed out. Sparks were coming out of broken power lines above her.

When she arrived at the lobby entrance, Kino took cover behind a blackened wall and scouted out the area. A group of students were huddled in front of the monster, shaking in terror. There were four of them.

"Oh."

They were all familiar faces--Kino had been stopped by them at the school gates this morning.



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"Kino! You have to fight the monster! Transform!" Hermes instructed, but Kino made a suggestion.

"Can't we wait until the monster beats them halfway to death?"

"That'll set a bad example for the younger readers. Now hurry up and transform. You know how it goes, right?"

"I guess I have no choice... if you insist... do I really have to do this...?" Asked Kino. She looked less than enthusiastic. Hermes quietly replied, "if you become a hero, people might buy you dinner for all your efforts."

"All right then! Let's do this!"

Kino looked straight ahead, eyes filled with determination. They shone like that time she happened upon a sign saying "Extra-large pork cutlet curry! Your meal's free if you finish it within an hour!" at a small restaurant (as a side note, she succeeded).

Kino drew her model gun from the holster on her right. She raised the plastic gun into the air, released the hammer, and fired.

"_____!"

(↑ Please make up a transformation catchphrase to insert above.)

The hammer struck the firing pin. The moment the sound of the igniting primer rang out, a bright light enveloped Kino's body. The background changed from a ruined hallway to a suspicious neon space, and upbeat background music began playing. This is, of course, all pre-recorded.

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After that, she started spinning around, her nude silhouette tastefully blinked in and out of sight in the lightshow, tendrils of light covered her from her fingertips and turned into clothing, et cetera. I'll leave this to your imagination.

Once the blinding light had faded away--

"Transformation complete! Kino is now "Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino!" Hermes shouted. Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino (abbrev. Kino) looked down at herself in surprise.

That's right. Kino was--

"What the heck? I don't look any different!"

She was dressed in a sailor uniform. She wore a belt with pouches and a holster, and she was holding a revolver. Her bangs were standing up in odd directions.

"I haven't changed at all! I look exactly the same--the transformation didn't work!" Kino spoke in shock. However, Hermes, still hanging from her belt, explained calmly.

"No, you *have* transformed. First, your model gun's turned into a real gun--Big Cannon~ Shining Iron Demon Destroyer. It can fire bullets that exorcise monsters. Not only that, your physical strength and athletic capabilities have been enhanced to superhuman levels. Your sailor uniform's sleeves have gotten 1 mm thicker, your skirt's gotten 3 mm shorter for fanservice, and the buckles on your pouches went from bear-shaped to wolf-shaped. And--"

"Never mind that! Everyone's going to know who I am if I go out like this!"



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"Don't worry about that."

"Why not?"

"You're transformed! No one will ever know you're Kino."

Before Kino could reply that Hermes must be out of his mind, the four Student Council members surrounded Kino. Strangely enough, they seemed to have regained some level of calm.

"Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino! You've come to rescue us!"

"Please, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino! Destroy the monster that's rampaging through our school!"

"Mysterious Gun Fighter Kino is here! We're saved!"

"Destroy it, Mysterious Kino!"

The four said their pieces and disappeared. The only ones left were the monster and the complaining Mysterious Kino.

"Why the heck did he call me 'Mysterious Kino'?"

Hermes replied, "See? Transformations always work like this. It's an unspoken rule."

"...Can I leave now?"

"No. The monster's waiting."

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The monster growled menacingly and set its sights on Kino. This was obviously because Kino was the only one around. Its swollen eyes were the size of mandarin oranges. The saliva dripping from the monster's maws congealed into a puddle. It stepped into the puddle with its right foot.

"Oh..."

At the very end of one of its toes was a green indoor shoe. Perhaps as an accessory for the season, there was a small sticker of a bamboo tree and a wish tag attached to the side.

"It can't be..."

"It *is*. This must be that girl who was rejected earlier. She's been tempted by evil and transformed into a monster."

"No way! That's terrible! Arghh, what am I supposed to do?"

"Shoot her with the Big Cannon ~ Shining Iron Demon Destroyer. It'll bring her back to normal."

"With this thing?" Kino looked at the revolver in her right hand.

"But remember, you can only fire one shot each time you transform. That's why you have to weaken it to make sure you can make the shot accurately."

"Then how am I supposed to--ackk!"

Kino just barely managed to dodge the monster's arm and claws. She fumbled and took aim at the monster, but was hit by its left fist before she could pull the trigger.

"Kyaaa!"

Kino was sent flying into a wall at the end of the hallway. She fell to the ground and landed on her rear. A large crack appeared on the wall she hit.

"That hurt! And my hair's a mess!"

"Normally you'd have died, huh? Get up, Kino. You have to fight."

Kino stood and raised her right arm, aiming at the monster running down the hall in all fours. However, it was difficult to properly aim at a moving target.



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"If you miss, it's all over." Hermes reminded her. Kino lowered Big Cannon and asked, "Aren't there any other weapons I can use?!"

"Nope, sorry."

Hearing Hermes' words, Kino bowed her head as if she remembered something--the pouches her grandmother gave her.

"This is it!"

Kino holstered Big Cannon and removed one of the pouches.

"I'll use them well, Grandma."

She turned the pouch upside-down and opened the cover.

Clang!

The sound of metal hitting metal echoed through the hallway. Out of the pouch barely big enough to fit in two packs of cigarettes came firearms. Handguns, rifles, machine guns, shotguns, sniper rifles, and others. Guns piled onto the floor in front of Kino.

"Wouldn't have expected any less from grandma!"

Kino's eyes shone brightly. She remembered that at grandma's house back in the countryside, there were all kinds of firearms from all over the world stashed away in storage. She also recalled sunset country roads, when she was often carried on her grandmother's back as a child.

Her grandmother had always told her, "Remember, Kino. Violence and justice are not the same thing. But you also have to remember that you can't save anyone by preaching justice without any strength to take action."

"Kino!"

The monster was mere meters in from of Kino. It was taking a breath, preparing to breathe fire.

"!"

From the mountain of guns Kino pulled out the police-use New Nambu 38-caliber revolver with her left hand and pulled the trigger multiple times at the monster.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! The clear sounds of gunshots accompanied the bullets. The monster jumped up as if it had been struck by a whip, and shattered a window as it fled into a

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classroom. Kino dropped the emptied revolver and picked out another handgun--a Chinese Tokarev semiautomatic. For some reason, it was painted red and white.

Kino put the rest of the guns back in her pouch. They kept sticking out of the top, so she organized them very carefully, closed the cover, and put it back on her belt.

"Chase after it, Kino!"

"Right!"

Kino pulled back and released the slide, loading the chamber ("loading" would be an incorrect term to use in the case of automatic weapons, but it just means that it's ready to fire the first shot) and ran after the monster, into the second-year junior high classroom.

At that exact moment, the monster tossed a desk at her. Kino barely managed to avoid it by rolling on the floor. The desk broke through the door and fell into the hallway with a crash. Gunshots rang out immediately.

Kino, half-standing, aimed the Tokarev with both hands and shot at the monster, which was escaping outside. Every shot found its mark. The monster escaped through the windows and jumped onto the central gardens. It tried to escape, trampling the morning glories along with their flowerpots.

Bang.

One shot hit its hind leg. The monster lost its balance and fell to the ground, leaning against the elm tree in the gardens. It seemed to have been greatly weakened.

"Good job, Kino! Now all you have to do is shoot Big Cannon ~ Shining Iron Demon Destroyer, and it'll return to normal!"

"Got it!"

Kino put the Tokarev back in the pouch and drew Big Cannon from the holster. She made her way out to the gardens through the hole made by the monster, set the flowerpots upright, and stood in front of the helpless monster.

"Grrrrrwwoorrrr..."



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The green indoor shoe was hanging from its toe.

"It'll be all right now. I'll bring you back to normal." Kino assured the monster, and aimed her large-caliber revolver. Her actions looked pretty hypocritical in comparison to what she just said, but that's only if you judge by appearance. I assure you that she's not being a hypocrite.

"Now or never, Kino."

"Yeah."

Just as Kino took aim, however--

"I see you may need my help."

A clear voice echoed. A confused expression appeared on Kino's face.

"When the maiden of justice finds herself in danger--" the clear voice rang out again.

"a lone knight descends from the distant skies!"

Kino looked towards the direction of the voice. A man stood on the rooftop of the shorter wing of the school building.

A breeze.

The man stood elegantly amidst the sound of the wind through the trees.

He wore a white school uniform. A pocket watch hung out from his pocket, and a katana with a black scabbard was secured to his side. A silken white cape fluttered from his shoulders.

"...!"

Kino was shocked at the sight of his face.

He was probably a tidy-looking young man, but his eyes were covered by a white mask. It was pristine white, covering his nose to his forehead. He wore sunglasses over his eyes. Atop his slightly long black hair were a pair of fluffy dog ears, and a bright red apple sat on the top of his head. A dove flew past him. In slow motion, at that.

"Huh?"

The man addressed the surprised Kino with a clear, powerful voice.

"Are you all right, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino?"

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"Um... well..."

"I have come to rescue you from peril!"

"Um... I'm not in any peril, thanks."

"It is the duty of a knight to extend a hand of salvation to maidens in distress! My apologies for keeping you waiting, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino!"

"Listen to people when they're talking. I wasn't waiting for you."

"I shall rescue you now!"

"Never mind. You're getting in my way. And why are you talking like you came from the 10th century?"

"That is indeed a good question! Yes, my name is--though I cannot reveal my true name--my post-transformation name is--!"

"I never asked you. To be honest, I don't even wanna get near you."

Hermes, who had been keeping quiet all this time, muttered, "his name should be 'Pervert'."

Kino nodded vigorously in agreement.

The man swished his cape and called out in a clear voice.

"My name is--'Samoyed Mask, the Pure-White Knight of Justice'!"

Tada! Ta-tatata! The sixth track from the OST, the theme song 'Oh, Our Beloved Samoyed Mask!' echoed throughout the school grounds. It was an upbeat piece with an elegant violin-centered melody. Occasional canine sounds like 'woof!' and 'bow-wow!' accented the piece.

As a side note, Samoyeds are a breed of dogs originating from Russia. They have thick white fur and appear as though they're always smiling. Riku is one.

"My other name is--'The Only One Samoyed Knight'!"

"Which one is it supposed to be?"

"Which one's your name?"

Kino and Hermes complained in unison.

"They're both too long."

"Let's just call him 'Pervert'."



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Samoyed Mask, the Pure-White Knight of Justice, or the Only One Samoyed Knight smiled refreshingly. His pearly white teeth sparkled.

"Ha-hahahahaha! Here I come! Hah!"

Samoyed Mask, the Pure-White Knight of Justice, or the Only One Samoyed Knight (I'd like to refer to him as 'Pervert' from this point on, but I'll refrain and call him 'Samoyed Mask') leapt from the rooftop with a sincerely happy laugh.

The story might have moved on faster if he had died in the fall, but Samoyed Mask ignored Kino and Hermes' hopes and landed softly on a patch of grass in the gardens.

"...I'll just ignore him and finish things."

Kino ignored the smiling Pervert--nay, Samoyed Mask, who was walking in her direction, and took aim at the monster with her Big Cannon.

"It's gone..."

There was nothing but an elm tree and a bent signboard detailing the history of the tree that was planted here ten years ago.

The monster had already fled. Kino's shoulders dropped.

"Now, land the killing blow! What seems to be the matter, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino?" Asked Samoyed Mask, as he walked up to Kino. Kino got angry.

"It got away because you decided to butt in!"

"Be careful... it's still on the school grounds."

"Listen to people when they're talking! This is all your fault!"

"Calm yourself, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino. It seems you may be lacking in calcium--make sure to eat lots of anchovies. Osteoporosis is a painful condition that should never be underestimated."

Kino decided that it would be best to ignore this man semipermanently.

Once she had collected herself, Kino began to follow the footprints left at the elm tree, towards the gymnasium.

"Be careful, Kino."

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The monster could come out of anywhere. Kino grasped Big Cannon tightly with her right hand and took out a Wz63 submachine gun from her pouch with her left hand. The Wz63 is a gun approximately 40 centimetres in length. The long magazine in the grip allows for 40 shots to be fired continuously. Kino prepared to shoot by pressing down on a rock with the end of the gun to push back the slide.

"Where could it be...?"

"It must be close. Don't let your guard down, Kino."

Kino slowly approached the gymnasium, sweat on her brow. She stopped beside the gymnasium entrance. She could hear something moving inside the building. Kino put her back to the entrance and prepared to charge in, but--

Crash!

The monster's hand broke through the gymnasium wall and made a grab at Kino. Kino, dodging with a dancelike spin, made a safe landing underneath a walkway within three rotations. The Wz63 in her left hand was already aimed squarely at the monster, which had burst out of the walls. It was impossible for Kino to miss. For a single moment, a cruel smile graced her lips .

"This might hurt, but it's for your own good."

Just as Kino put pressure on her left index finger--

"Watch out, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino!"

The man who didn't care about being ignored drew his katana. And swung it around. The blade glimmered silver, in a completely different direction from the monster. He had sliced apart the base of the walkway.

"Huh?"

It's common sense that cutting down the pillars will bring down the roof. Towards Kino.

"Ackkk!"

Over 80% of the walkway collapsed on top of Kino with a loud crash. From amidst the dust, Kino's eyes widened. She would have been crushed flat if she were even a moment late to dodge.



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When the dust cleared--

"Haah! Hiyaaaa! Die! Stop running away!"

The idiotic samurai chased the fleeing monster into the gymnasium and was madly swinging around his katana. Walls were sliced open and podiums were destroyed. The flagpole was in pieces and the basketball net had fallen apart.

The man did not stop, even after the monster had escaped through a window.

"Hmph! So there you are! Haaaaah! Six more! Die! Destroy! Slash! KILL!"

The crumpled silken cape, the mask over his face, the apple and puppy ears on his head, and his clear voice as he rampaged through the gymnasium would make anyone think, 'It must be hard, taking life so seriously...'

Swish-swish-swish-swish... Boomboomboom! Crackcrack...

"..."

"..."

Kino and Hermes could do little more than watch, unable to even open their mouths, as the gymnasium fell to pieces. But Kino asked anyway, "You think there's anything I can do over there?"

"No." Hermes answered promptly.

The gymnasium, filled with the memories of countless students, collapsed in an instant. The man who was swinging his katana in the midst of the destruction spoke with his dust-covered face.

"Tch. It got away. Perhaps I was being too lax..."

And he smiled and waved at Kino, who was coming in his direction.

"Ahoy there, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino! Are you well?"

Kino silently took aim with the Wz63 in her left hand and pulled the trigger. On automatic.

Bang! The 9mm rounds fired continuously. The slide pumped rapidly, and the shell casings flew into the air and fell to the ground like rain.

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"WaitasecondwhatisthemeaningofthisMysteriousBishoujoGunFighter RiderKinoIamnotyourenemy." Said the Samoyed Mask, as he deflected the bullets with his sword.

"ThisismostperplexingMysteriousBishoujoGunFighterRiderKinobutdeflectingbulletsslikethisisnothingformeasIcanreadyouraimandthemovementofyourfingers." The Samoyed Mask swung his arm and the sword at inhuman speeds and deflected the bullets.

Kino was out of ammo. She lowered the smoking Wz63. As she put it back into the pouch, annoyed--

"Have you calmed yourself, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino? Now, let us work together to defeat the true enemy!" Said the Samoyed Mask, with a straight face. There was blood flowing from under his mask from the three or so shots he could not deflect, but he himself didn't seem too bothered by this.

"Can I use the Big Cannon? I want to shoot that pervert."

"Control yourself."

As Kino and Hermes spoke among themselves...

"Awwwwoooooo!"

They heard a wolf-like howl--the monster was badly wounded. Kino looked skyward and saw the monster on the rooftop, beside the railings. That place was--

"Look out, Kino! That's where the girl was rejected. If she's still got some memories of herself, she might end up doing something rash!"

"No! I have to save her!"

As Kino made a run for the building, Hermes interrupted.

"Wait, Kino! There's a faster way up there."

Suddenly, Hermes--the green leather cell phone strap with yellow metallic decorations--floated up into the air and was enveloped by a bright light. The leather parts turned into round black tires, and the metal parts turned into the handle, the gas tank, the frame, and the engine.

"What's this...?"



GAKUEN KINO

Kino, who had shut her eyes in response to the bright light, opened them and saw--

"Get on! You can ride up to the rooftop!"

a talking motorcycle. It was an offroad motorcycle, with a red chassis and purple gas tank. Hermes had returned to his true form.

"I wouldn't have been late for school if you'd transformed this morning..."

"Never mind, hurry!"

Kino took a seat and slammed the kickstart pedal. Vrrrrmm! The bike started with the sound unique to a two-stroke engine. I would like to advise you that when riding on public roads, you should always wear your helmet. And in the rare case that you ride your motorcycle through the school grounds, always make sure to get permission from the principal first.

Kino revved the engine.

"Let's go, Hermes!"

"Blast-off! Our ride of love begins now!" Declared Samoyed Mask, as he suddenly took the back seat and embraced Kino from behind. Kino smacked him in the face with her left hand and knocked him off the motorcycle as she drove off.

"Ugh!"

Kino and Hermes charged towards the school building, showering the fallen Samoyed Mask with dust. The hallways were filled with debris from the collapsing walls.

"Haah!"

When she arrived at the stairs, Kino immediately pulled the throttle and leaned back, climbing the stairs on bike. At landings, she made turns by skidding and spinning the rear wheel--past the second, third, and fourth floors, ducking at the last landing and going through the metal doors, out onto the rooftop.

The monster was still standing on the other side of the railings.

"Don't do anything rash!" Kino yelled, as she stopped Hermes and disembarked.

"Ack!" Hermes yelled, as he fell to the side with a loud crash.

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"That was cruel."

Kino took a step towards the monster, but stopped, noticing that the monster was prepared to jump at any second.

"Doesn't... matter..." The monster spoke. It was the frail voice of the girl who was crying in the semibasement landing.

"Shizu-senpai... says... I'm... a waste of time..." The 3-meter tall monster hesitated as it hung from the railings, tears falling from its huge eyes.

"That's not true!" Kino shouted, "Shizu-senpai doesn't think you're a waste of time!"

"Rea...lly...?"

Kino spread her arms wide and put her heart into her words.

"That's right! He's just not too great at refusing people... I think. I swear I wasn't secretly watching, okay? Anyway, there's no need for you to go on a rampage!"

"But... he kissed... that short-haired girl... right after..."

Kino's jaw dropped. She turned back to Hermes and asked, "I kissed him?"

"She was probably shown an illusion. Anyway, set me back upright!"

Kino ignored Hermes and turned back to the monster.

"That's a misunderstanding! He said that he didn't want to go out with anyone! He told me himself--uh, that's what everyone says!"

"Then... why was I destroying everything?" Asked the monster.

"It's pretty normal to get upset if you've been turned down, right? Sometimes you beat up a pillow, and sometime you end up destroying half the school! It's no big deal." Kino replied, looking straight into the monster's eyes. For reference, the collateral damage to the school building was in the six-digit range, not counting the idiotically demolished gymnasium.

"You're right... I want to go back to being me... I don't want to hate... anyone... not even myself... I don't want to destroy anything anymore..."



GAKUEN KINO

The monster slowly climbed back over the railing and landed on the rooftop's concrete floor. The railing scrunched under the weight. Another \$1000 worth of damage.

"Then come back to normal!"

"How... do I... do that?" The monster asked, as it slowly approached Kino. Kino drew Big Cannon with her right hand and took aim at the monster.

"Just stay still. I'll bring you back to normal, so close your eyes and think of what you want to be--and wish from the bottom of your heart."

"I... want to go back... to the old me, still in love with senpai... someone capable of love... to my wonderful life..."

The monster came to a stop and looked up into the skies, and closed its eyes. Its tears fell to the ground.

"I want to go back..."

Hermes gave Kino the signal. "Now, Kino."

"Yeah."

Kino cocked the gun in her right hand. With the click, she aimed squarely at the monster's chest--

"Look out, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino!"

Samoyed Mask ruined everything by bursting through the metal doors, covered in sweat.

The monster was quick to react to the foe it was battling earlier. It lunged towards him without hesitation.

"Come, I shall strike you down with this sword!"

The monster charged at Samoyed Mask, who had drawn his katana.

Kino followed the monster with Big Cannon.

"I can't miss... just one shot..."

Very soon, the monster and Samoyed Mask were perfectly aligned. Kino braced herself.

"Now! I hope I get them both!"

Baaaaang!

A long, heavy gunshot rang out from the rooftop.

And silence came over the school.

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The girl who was being carried out on a stretcher mumbled to herself, crying. The paramedics would never realize the meaning behind her tears.

When the students returned to their classrooms after receiving the all-clear, they found their classmate sprawled out with her arms over her desk. She was a girl with short hair, who was also completely uninjured.

"Dammit! Too bad I couldn't get him at the same time... who the hell was that pervert?"

The girl mumbled and sighed, chin sitting on her desk. Her classmates would never realize the meaning behind her sigh.

When the third-year teacher returned to his classroom, he was met by a student with a katana at his side. The young man was standing calmly, bleeding profusely from his head.

"I'm glad you're all right, sensei." He greeted in his trademark clear voice. The teacher didn't care for the true meaning behind those words--he just wanted to know why this student was balancing an apple on his head. However, he managed to hold back from asking.

"I suppose even the most brilliant students can be prone to hysteric episodes..."

The wind swept through the school grounds. The little sticker with the bamboo tree and the wish tag was blown away from the rooftop and disappeared into the wind.

This was the beginning of Kino, Hermes, and Shizu's new adventures.

What lies ahead of them? What will they see? What will they find, eat, and lose?

Their school days had only just begun.

Hey Shizu, shouldn't you get yourself to the nurse's office?



Chapter 2: The Annoying Guy is a Transfer Student, Woof! ~Before Dog Days~ (Part 1)

It was evening.

Wispy clouds were scattered over the clear skies, and the setting sun shone warmly over the earth. It still a little hot, but a refreshing breeze blew away the daytime heat. It was summertime, at the end of the rainy season. It happened to be a Sunday.

A girl stood on the balcony of the school dormitory.

The dorms stood amidst a verdant green forest. There were two rectangular buildings, each five storeys high. The cylindrical building sandwiched between them contained the student cafeteria and the staff room.

The girl, appearing to be in her mid-teens, stood on the third floor balcony of this dormitory with her elbows on the railings and a bored look on her face.

Her short black hair fluttered in the wind. She was a pretty girl with a pleasant face.

She was wearing a pair of green shorts and a light green T-shirt. Printed in small font on the left-hand side of the T-shirt were the words "You will only speak when spoken to". On the back of the shirt were printed the words, "But the Marine Corps lives forever" in large type. They were both written in a very cute font. A little below was the quote, "And that means you live forever". No one knows where they sell shirts like this, so please don't ask.²

² These quotes are from the 1987 Stanley Kubrick film, *Full Metal Jacket*.

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"Phew..." The girl sighed. Her voice was carried into the summer skies by the breeze.

"What's wrong, Kino? You've done nothing but sigh for the past little while." A voice said suddenly. It certainly did not belong to the girl--the voice sounded more like that of a young boy. And yet balcony was empty, save for the girl. The balconies next door and above were also deserted.

"Is it because you have to go to school again tomorrow? But it's going to be summer break soon... Oh, wait! I got it! I bet you're worried about your first term report card, right?" Asked the mysterious voice. The girl--Kino--did not seem surprised in any way by the disembodied voice.

"That's not it. Not that I'm *not* worried..."

She continued, "It's the school... there just seem to be way too many people here who fall for the temptation of evil..."

"What, that's it? That's only--" said the mystery voice. Kino rummaged through her pocket and took out a cell phone strap. It was a simple green and yellow strap, made of leather and metal. Attached to it was not a cellphone (that Kino did not own), but a key that wasn't her room key.

"Only *what*, Hermes?" Asked Kino, bringing the strap to eye-level. If anyone could see this, Kino might have been admitted to an asylum. However--

"That's only--" Hermes answered in a perfectly calm voice. It seemed that the voice was coming from the phone strap.



GAKUEN KINO

Hermes continued in a knowing tone, "That's only because young people have a great deal of anxiety and stress about life. Their future, friendships, romance, school..."

"Really...?" Kino muttered. She didn't seem to get it.

"Yes, really. You're the only one who thinks about nothing but eating and sleeping, Kino." Hermes declared. Kino, taking offence to that, immediately took action.

"Get lost!"

Kino chucked Hermes.

"You're actually throwing me--- ahhhh..."

Poor Hermes could do nothing but scream as he flew in an arc and disappeared into the woods.

<The School Arc--Previously on>

Kino, Hermes, and Shizu had been travelling through space in pursuit of the Galactic Overlord. As they visited a backwater planet to stock up on supplies, the Goddess of the planet, valuing their fighting skills, asked them for help.

Kino and company, having mercilessly declined, were taken against their will. Injected with false memories, Kino, Hermes, and the extremely popular and handsome Shizu found themselves going to school.

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The main character of this story--Kino, the high school student, transforms into the Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino in order to defeat students-turned demons and restore them to human form.

I think some mysterious perv calling himself "Samoyed Mask" might have something to do with the story, too. Who in the world could he possibly be?

This is a quick summary of the events that have so far taken place.

The story this time takes place after two or three incidents of students turning into demons and being safely turned back to normal, with some perv in a mask interfering each time...

If this were an anime, it would count as approximately episode five?

Gakuen Kino Chapter 2: *The Annoying Guy is a Transfer Student, woof! ~Before Dog Days~*

"--I ended up throwing him... but now I have to go find him again..." Kino complained, as she left the dorms and headed into the forest.

Kino was wearing sneakers and a light parka, because the sun was going down and it was getting a bit chilly. Emblazoned loudly on the light yellow parka was the quote, "Upham! Ammo, Goddamn it!"³

³ Quote from *Saving Private Ryan*.



GAKUEN KINO

Around her waist was a belt with multiple pouches attached. On the holster on the right side of her waist was a model gun. At the moment it was a piece of perfectly legal plastic, but when Kino transformed, it became a dangerous weapon she used to seal demons--the Big Cannon~ Shining Iron Demon Destroyer.

The forest was dark and empty. A crow cawed in the distance.

"Maybe I ended up throwing him even further? Hermes! Answer me if you can hear me! I promise I won't throw you again! Probably."

Kino searched through the woods, but the summer overgrowth was making it difficult for her. The sun had set, and the area was getting darker.

"If I don't find him, I guess I'll just have to give up. Maybe I'll see him again someday." Said Kino. She's a cruel person.

Suddenly, she heard a rustle from the foliage, about 10 metres away. It was quite loud.

"-huh?"

Kino, guarded, looked in the direction of the noise. She saw nothing but trees and foot-long grass. There was no one there.

"Who's there?" She asked. Kino received no answer, but the rustling noise got even closer.

"Could it be a demon...?"

Worry crossed Kino's face. She reached for the model gun at her side. Maybe she could get the jump on the enemy. --maybe not. --no, wait, maybe she could. --I guess it'll be too difficult.

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"Where is it?"

There's no use asking the ground, Kino. Look straight ahead of you.

The rustling sounds came even closer.

"...."

Kino's eyes flashed, ready to face the demon.

However, a fluffy white head poked itself out of a bush a little ways away.

"What... it was a dog?"

It was indeed a dog. Nothing unusual for one to be hiding in the bushes.

"He's pretty cute."

He was indeed a pretty cute dog. He was covered in long white fur. His almond-shaped eyes and fluffy face made it look as though he was smiling. His pointed ears occasionally twitched.

"He's a really big dog."

He was indeed a large dog, at least one metre in length from nose to tail. He must be quite big.

The white dog approached Kino without so much as a snarl or a glare. Kino beckoned the dog over.

She crouched in front of the dog and petted its head.



GAKUEN KINO

"Good boy. Nice doggy."

It seemed she had completely forgotten about Hermes. The dog took a seat and allowed for more pettings.

After Kino spent a bit of time petting the dog's head and neck, she asked, "Did you run away from home? Did you want to be free, Papillon?"

The peaceful moment was very quickly interrupted.

"Help... me..." Hermes croaked. His voice was muted. Kino looked around to find him.

"Hermes? ...Where are you?"

"Over here..."

The voice was coming from nearby. Kino's eyes were wide with surprise when the dog opened its mouth and deposited something onto the grass.

"Ack!"

It was Hermes, who was earlier unceremoniously tossed by Kino. He was completely covered in sticky dog drool.

"That was terrible..." Hermes complained.

"You found him for me? Good dog." Kino praised the dog, pretending she hadn't even heard Hermes.

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Hermes, still lying on the grass, complained, "How could you just throw me away like that, Kino? Thanks to you, I ended up stuck inside a suspicious dog's mouth."

No sooner had Hermes finished speaking that the dog looked straight at him and growled.

"What, you wanna pick a fight? You're just a dog!"

"Rrrrrrrrghhhhh..."

There was a tense moment of mutual antagonism, but Kino swiftly ended it by picking up Hermes, wiping him on some grass, and lifting him up to her face.

"That was close. Thanks, Kino."

"That dog saved you, Hermes. You could try being a bit nicer."

"No. He's way too suspicious."

"Suspicious?"

"I don't know exactly what it is, but I'm getting a bad feeling about him. I bet he's the leader of all the demons! He's gotta be!"

"What are you talking about? Did you hit your head when you fell, Hermes?"

"Says the person who chucked me off the third floor! Anyway, this dog's really suspicious. I can feel it! He's up to no good!"

"All right, all right."



GAKUEN KINO

"Are you even listening to me, Kino?! He's definitely untrustworthy!"

Kino put the shouting Hermes in her pant pocket. The dog had stopped growling, so she lightly patted it on the head and said, "I have to go. It's almost dinnertime. Thanks for your help."

"Woof." The dog barked, as if he had understood Kino.

"What a smart dog. Bye now."

Kino turned and headed back to the dorms.

The white dog sat on the ground, staring at Kino's retreating figure.

Kino eventually disappeared into the foliage. The woods were deserted.

"Hah. That human was so easy to manipulate..." The dog mumbled in human tongue. He had the voice of a world-weary middle-aged man.

A strange light appeared in his eyes. He still *appeared* to be smiling because his face was shaped that way.

"Fwahahahaha. Hahahahaha."

Seriously. He was really laughing. After indulging himself in content laughter for some time, he pushed himself off the ground with a strange cry.

"Hmph!"

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And then--my God! The concrete walls of the garage that did nothing but get in the car's way had turned into an amazing food cabinet--I mean, the dog's body was enveloped in a faint light.

In the dark woods, the dog-shaped light source slowly began to grow larger. He grew taller. He was human height.

The light eventually took on the form of a lean human being, about the same height as Kino.

A moment later, the light faded away into particles with a "whoosh".

"This should be about right..."

No longer was it a dog standing alone in the woods.

It was a human--a boy who appeared to be about the same age as Kino.

He was quite the prettyboy, to boot. His beautiful face would give anyone who looked upon it the chills.

His unruly long hair cascaded over his shoulders. It was bright white. Each individual strand shone semi-transparently as it fluttered in the wind. He had sharp black eyes that one could drown in. He was extremely lean, and his skin was so pale it seemed to diametrically oppose everything tanning salons stood for.

The above descriptors could also very well describe a young woman, but at the moment, no such confusion was possible. It was impossible to not figure out that he was male.

Why? Because he was completely naked.



GAKUEN KINO

"First, I should find some clothing." The dog-turned prettyboy muttered in a boyish voice, and plucked a large leaf from nearby. His attempt to walk through the woods, covering his _____ area with a leaf and with his rear in plain view, was quite the eyesore.

Ring ring~!

Editorial dept.: "This is the infamous Dengeki Bunko Editorial Department. Whaddaya want?"

Sigsawa: "Hello, this is Sigsawa, the lazy author. I'd like to speak to my editor, _____."

Editorial dept: "Gimme a sec."

Editor: "Hey Sigsawa! I've read through until this part. It's pretty good!"

Sigsawa: "Thank you. I finally had Riku appear like I hinted earlier, but..."

Editor: "Yeah, good job."

Sigsawa: "About that... since I properly followed up on the foreshadowing from last chapter, can I just cut him from the plot now?"

Editor: "Absolutely not! What's gotten into you?"

Sigsawa: "I'm afraid the Riku fans might tear me to shreds..."

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Editor: "Don't worry about that. Remember how you turned all the Shizu fans against you last chapter? Compared to that, this is a cakewalk."

Sigsawa: "..."

Editor: "Now get back to work on the rest of the chapter. You're way past the deadline anyway."

Sigsawa: "Yes sir..."

So the story continues.

Monday morning.

Students began to filter into the school. It was not long before summer break would begin.

This academy housed both a junior high and high school. The students would be referred to as years first through sixth. Of course, anyone who's read the first chapter would know this.

The girls' uniforms were sailor suits. For the boys, they had a choice of either a white high-collar shirt and white pants, or grey pants and dress shirt with a tie embroidered with the school crest.

Students who lived in the area took the school bus from a nearby bus stop and were dropped off in front of the school. Dormitory students like Kino had to make their way uphill from the dormitory buildings to the school.



GAKUEN KINO

Once again, it was a bright, sunny day. It was shaping up to be a very hot day.

Kino walked uphill with the other students, under the shade of the green cherry blossom trees. She was wearing her sailor suit today, but like yesterday, she wore the belt with pouches and the model gun. She was carrying a light beige messenger bag by the shoulder strap.

"Looks like you're going to be on time today, huh?" Hermes asked discreetly, hanging from the belt.

"I might get into trouble if I'm late any more this term."

"That's understandable."

"But there isn't much more of this left. I can just kill time in class, and soon it'll be summer break. Then I'll be able to take a break from that Justice thing. I won't have to see Pervert Mask, either. I can't wait." Kino muttered, as she continued the walk to school.

As a side note, repairs were being done on the school building from the crack of dawn. Part of it was because of the monster attacks, but a good chunk of the damage was done by a trigger-happy Kino. More than half of the rest was collateral damage created by a certain masked man and his katana.

"Good morning, everyone," greeted Kino's homeroom teacher, as he walked into the classroom at the sound of the bell. He was an old man of over 70 years, but there was no mandatory retirement age in the school because it was a private academy. Occasionally he would stray from the lessons and tell autobiographical and

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slightly risque tales of his days as a young womanizer. The students lovingly nicknamed him "Pervy Old Man".

"Hmm... I don't have any announcements concerning the lesson, but..." The teacher paused for a moment, but continued.

"We have a new transfer student."

Everyone was a bit surprised. Transfer students were not particularly a rare species in this private boarding school, but it was unusual for anyone to transfer into class at this time of year. After all, there was less than a week until summer break would begin. They did practically nothing in class until summer break started. Most students would not transfer into the new school until after the break--who would remember the new kid after the summer, anyway?

The teacher opened the classroom door and called in the new student.

The class's collective gaze turned to the door. Approximately one person, a girl sitting beside the window at the very back of the classroom carrying a model gun, didn't seem too interested, but she spared a glance anyway.

A moment later, chaos descended upon the classroom. A kind of chatty, excitable chaos that manifested in exclamations such as "Oh?" "Wow!" "Kyaaa!" etc.

The source of the chaos was the new student who set foot into the classroom.

His white dress shirt clued everyone into the fact that he was male, but his pants were black instead of the usual grey.



GAKUEN KINO

He was the very young man who was roaming through the forest butt-naked last night. Of course, no one in the class could possibly know that.

His beautiful long hair and pretty face made the hearts of girls in the class (as well as some guys, who immediately shook their heads and muttered, "no, no..." under their breaths) go aflutter.

The class knew better than to scream like fangirls at the new transfer student, but the girls in the class had a certain glint in their eyes. The girls, with the exception of approximately one--the one with the model gun.

The boy walked up to the front amidst the attention. He was perfectly calm despite the dozens of pairs of eyes trained upon him. The sound of the teacher writing the boy's name on the blackboard played like background music.

What could his name be? It must be something cool. It has to be. It must be an amazing name.

Those were the only things going through the minds of the girls. Just as they say that the opposite of love is ambivalence, humans want to know everything they can about people they're interested in.

The sound of chalk against slate ceased, and--

"Let me introduce the new student." The teacher turned around. The name written on the blackboard and the teacher's gentle voice assaulted the students in unison.

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"His name is Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou⁴."

Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou.

Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou.

Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou.

A sense of bloodlust and hatred for the cruel, unfair world and the new student's parents began to permeate the classroom. Several of the girls were on the verge of collapse.

"Nice to meet you, everyone." Said Inuyama, in a bright voice that perfectly matched his appearance.

"Inuyama has been living in Brushels, Belgium because of his parents' jobs."

"It's Brussels, Belgium, sir." Inuyama corrected.

"Sorry about that. Anyway, he's come back to Japan alone, and will be moving into the dorms. He's just arrived this morning, so please lend him a hand whenever you can. Now, as for your seat..."

The teacher looked around and pointed out to an empty seat.

"Looks like the seat beside Kino's is open."

⁴ Inuyama's name: Inuyama=Dog Mountain, Wanwan=Japanese for the sound of a dog barking (akin to Bow wow or woof woof in English), Rikutarou=Riku comes from the Kino's Journey character, and Tarou is a stereotypical boys' name in Japanese.



GAKUEN KINO

Of course, it just *had* to be the seat next to Kino. The girls sighed enviously.

Kino, who was blankly staring out the window, was taken by surprise when the teacher called her name.

"Who? Me?"

Just as Kino refocused her gaze, Inuyama made his way over. He was right in front of Kino in the blink of an eye.

"Nice to meet you, Kino. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance." Said Inuyama, with a refreshing smile on his face. He was being strangely formal.

"Oh... Hi." Kino answered halfheartedly.

Amongst the green-eyed girls in the classroom was one particular young lady who exuded a particularly dark aura.

There was a small bell attached to the phone strap on her red flip-phone in her desk. You've probably noticed, but this is foreshadowing. Please remember this character.

The lesson began.

Classes from first period to third period were mostly going over exam results, but Inuyama stuck very close to Kino the entire time. Of course, this even included the breaks.

"You're so quiet, Kino."

"That model gun looks great on you, Kino."

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"What a strange cell phone strap you have."

"Kino--"

Of course, other students tried to talk to Inuyama during breaks, but he ignored them all.

Kino, on the other hand, answered Inuyama's questions as politely as she could without antagonizing him. She could feel the glares from other parts of the classroom burning into her skin.

"What's with him? He's so annoying." Kino complained quietly. It was breaktime, just before fourth period began. Kino told Inuyama, who was peppering her with questions, that she was going to the washroom, and left the class. Once she finished her business, Kino didn't go back to the classroom--she took a detour and stopped at the semi-basement landing. She was in the middle of complaining to Hermes, whom she had lifted up to her face.

"Kino... There's something suspicious about that transfer student." Said Hermes, in a quiet voice.

"He is, isn't he? Why can't he go bother someone else? Everyone's dying to talk to him--why does he have to annoy me, of all people?"

"No, that's not what I'm worried about--although it's true guys don't try to approach you a lot, Kino."

"Are you trying to make me angry?"



GAKUEN KINO

"No, no. It's just that... I'm getting a bad feeling about that Inuyama guy."

"Again? That's what you said about the dog yesterday."

"It is. It's kind of similar this time, but somehow different."
Hermes' voice was unusually serious. Kino stared at him curiously. Soon, the bell rang.

"Oh no! The fourth period teacher's really strict about tardiness. I'd better get back."

Kino put Hermes on her belt and ran up the stairs in the hopes of making it to class on time.

Kino hurried back into class.

"The teacher has a cold, so we have a quiet study period."

Unfortunately, the this had no bearing on the actual state of the classroom. Students were chattering moderately loudly, eating their lunches early, reading manga, taking naps, and enjoying their free time. Several of the boys headed to the library with a box in hand.

"I'm gonna take a nap." Kino mumbled. She was planning to wake up in time to make it to the student cafeteria just as it opened (about 15 minutes before fourth period ended), but--

"Kino."

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The white-haired prettyboy, Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou, talked to her with that refreshing smile on his face. Kino, who had fallen asleep within 3 and a half seconds of her face hitting the desk, turned to face him with an obvious look of displeasure.

"Whaddya want?"

"You're beautiful even when you're angry."

"You made me angry just to say that?" Kino's words already had an antagonistic tone to them. On a side note, Inuyama was surrounded by a group of girls who wanted to talk to him, but he was still completely ignoring them.

"No, that's not it... I was wondering if you'd show me around the school, since we have a study period."

"What? Why me? ...go ask someone else."

"It's because you're sitting next to me. I really like you, Kino. I'd love it if you could show me around."

A strange combination of sounds echoed from behind Inuyama's smiling visage--the sound of pencils and desks snapping, veins popping, handkerchiefs being bitten into, and muscles expanding monstrously.

'If I stay here, I'll be killed.' thought Kino. Her sense of potential disaster aversion was greater than that of a certain country's Prime Minister.

"O-okay! Thanks! I'll show you around. Follow me, quick." Kino got up from her seat and escaped the murderous classroom, dragging Inuyama by hand.



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The girls in the classroom began complaining with thoughts like, 'Why's he asking *her*, of all people?', 'She doesn't even stand out.', 'All she does is eat.', 'She's nothing but a model gun geek', and 'What does he see in her?'

One girl, however, was quiet. She merely walked through the other classroom doors in silence, footsteps heavy.

The bell on the cell phone in her hand did not make a sound.

"As I thought, you're such a kind person."

"I'm not. I'll give you a quick tour and ditch you once the cafeteria opens."

Kino and Inuyama were walking through the hallways, speaking quietly so they wouldn't disturb the other classes.

"If that's the case, shall we have lunch together? I'm planning to eat at the cafeteria as well." Asked Inuyama, face brightly lit with a smile.

"No." Kino replied immediately.

Still, being a fundamentally good person, Kino showed Inuyama around the school.

"--That's the A/V room. We watch Discovery Channel shows there. They turn out the lights during the screenings, so it's perfect for taking naps. Over there are the junior high classrooms. The first years are pretty adorable, but sometimes they're really loud.

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Here's the music room. We draw nose hairs on the Brahms portrait, goatees on the Liszt portrait, and topknots on the Bach portrait. This is the nurse's office. About 10% of the people here are lightly injured, and 90% are ditching class. Once in a really long time, you get seriously injured people here. There's the faculty office. It's always messy for some reason--they made the area smoke-free, so apparently people have to go to the window side to smoke. That's the library. It's where they keep all the books. I hear a bunch of people get together and play with dice. This is the Ninomiya Sontoku statue. They say it walks around at night when no one's looking. This here's the science lab. They keep all the litmus paper here. The teacher brews coffee in the beakers, so people call the place 'The Cafe'. Over here's the washrooms. No explanation needed, right? They installed heating systems and bidets last year. This is the staff room. That lady named Satake is a walking dictionary. Over that way are the sports clubs' offices. They smell like sweat. Across from there's the second club room that the anime, manga, and video game clubs use. Normal people don't really go there. It's sometimes called 'The Moe Tower'. There's the assembly hall. It's perfect for falling asleep. Over here's the pool, AKA 'Mariana'. It's really deep because of the diving boards. And the gym. It's still under repairs because some idiot destroyed it with a sword. That's everything."

There was still some time left, even after the full tour.

"Finished. I'm gonna kill some time until the cafeteria opens, so we can split up here. Bye."

The moment Kino took her first step from the school entrance, Inuyama asked, "Um, where are you going?"

"The rooftop. Don't follow me." Kino replied. Inuyama walked right up to her and smiled.



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"I don't think I've seen that part of the school yet."

"This is the rooftop. Happy now?" Asked Kino, once they had reached the deserted rooftop. The summer sun shone down upon them. The forests stretched out into the distance. It was a little hot, but it wasn't very humid and the rooftop was cooled by a refreshing breeze.

"I see. Thank you very much. The view from here is wonderful--I feel so at ease here."

Inuyama was as attractive as always, but to Kino, he was nothing but a pest. She was planning to spend the rest of the period talking with Hermes.

"The wind is so nice."

Unfortunately, it seemed that the handsome young man had taken a liking to this place. He leaned against the recently repaired railings, hair aflutter in the wind.

"I'm gonna go back to class now." Kino excused herself, as she stepped towards the metal doors.

"Wait, Kino--"

"...This guy's insane." Kino mumbled, and turned to face him. Inuyama, face radiant, hair blowing in the wind, looked Kino straight in the eye.

"I think you're a truly wonderful person."

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That was a very sudden thing to say. Kino frowned.

"You're so very kind, too. I was moved by your gentleness."

Kino wanted to yell, 'you were the one who dragged me around!', but she shut herself up, feeling that Inuyama wouldn't be fazed even if she took a sledgehammer to his face.

"Leaving my home country like that... maybe I was feeling lonely, somewhere deep down."

Kino refrained from saying, 'who cares?'.

"I'm a little embarrassed at myself for saying goodbye to my parents at the airport with such overconfidence."

She also refrained from saying, 'if you didn't notice, this is pretty embarrassing, too'.

"But maybe the Goddess of Fate is smiling down upon me. No, maybe it's the Goddess of Love..."

Kino was very close to telling him, 'maybe you should get yourself checked out by the Goddess of Mental Health', but held herself back with great effort.

"So, what I mean to say is... I love you! Will you go out with me?"

"Huh...?" Kino mumbled, "What?"

She took a moment to be surprised that she had just been confessed to.



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"W-w-w-w-w-wait a sec. W-w-w-w-what are you talking about?"

And of course, being in this very unfamiliar situation, she fell into a panic.

"So, this suspiciously dubious prettyboy says he wants to be your boyfriend, Kino." Hermes explained, breaking the silence.

"What do you say?"

"Ack!"

Inuyama had already taken Kino's hands in his.

"My intentions are completely serious! I love you!"

Inuyama's love confessions struck with perfectly shocking timing.

"N-no. I, d-d-d-d-"

"You *do* like me? I'm so happy to hear that!"

Inuyama's lines so precisely rendered Kino dumbstruck.

"Wait!" Kino waved her hands about. Because Inuyama was holding her hands, it looked almost like the two were dancing.

"Let me go!" Kino spun around, removing her hands from Inuyama's grip, and stepped back.

"Hold it! I don't like you!" She uttered, trying to catch her breath.

"Then you can start now! You can come to love me from this point on! Right? Of course you will. Our romance is only just beginning!"

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Inuyama never lost his cool.

"Ugh..." Kino, at a loss for words, was thinking dangerous thoughts of taking out the prettyboy with one of the machine guns in her pouch.

"Stop it."

A clear voice rang out over the school rooftop. Kino and Inuyama looked in the direction of the voice, coming from the other end of the rooftop.

A breeze.

He was a tidy-looking young man with a melancholy look in his eyes. His slightly long black hair danced in the wind. His pristine white uniform was topped by a single katana strapped to the belt.

He walked over quietly, gaze unwavering. The sound of his every step rang out clearly. The afternoon sun shone off the katana. A dove flew past him. In slow motion, at that.

"..."

Inuyama's eyes flashed sharply. For a single moment, his eyes filled with many complex feelings--hatred and resentment, love and loathing, master and servant, trust and betrayal, past and future, truth and lies, apples and oranges, Yamada-kun and the seat cushion, among others.

"Oh, Shizu-senpai..." Kino muttered reflexively.



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That's right. His name was Shizu. A sixth year in the academy, which equates to a third-year high school student.

Handsome good looks, elegance, top-of-the-class academics, and top-notch athletic skills. Shizu was the most popular student in the entire school, bar none. His trademark katana was at his side, well-maintained as usual. Please don't worry about the blatant ignorance of weapon possession laws--stuff like this is pretty common.

These days, it was rumoured that Shizu was often seen in the music room, practicing all kinds of instruments, like guitar, piano, drums, and saxophone.

Shizu imposingly stepped forward and stopped exactly 2 metres and 35 centimetres in front of Kino and Inuyama.

"Good afternoon, Kino. Thank you for the melon bread the other day." He smiled, talking naturally to Kino with a hint of melancholy in his voice.

Kino bowed quickly in surprise. "It was nothing. Oh, good afternoon."

Shizu greeted her in reply. He turned to Inuyama with a sharp look that almost resembled a glare.

"It's not very courteous to coerce a lady." Pointing out common sense to shame the opposition--it was truly a Shizu-brand technique. Inuyama reluctantly brought himself back down to earth.

"I understand, senpai. It's my first day at this school--I guess I got carried away."

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Kino was a little surprised to see Inuyama back down so easily, after he had so persistently fought off all of *her* attempts to get rid of him.

"I'm glad you understand." Said Shizu.

"Yeah. I didn't know Kino had such a perfect boyfriend."

Inuyama's words left Kino in extreme surprise. Shizu seemed to have been shocked in his own way, as well. They were both at a loss for words.

"I'm sorry for getting in the way of your rooftop date."

"Huh? Wait, we're not--"

"If you'll excuse me."

Inuyama didn't even try to listen to Kino as he smiled calmly and ran downstairs, white hair swishing in the wind.

"..."

"..."

The duo broke their stares at Inuyama's retreating figure and ended up facing each other.

"..."

"..."



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An awkward silence. Kino looked down at the concrete floor, and Shizu look up at the blue sky.

Inuyama, who had run past the metal doors and arrived at the landing, smiled.

"Fufufu..."

The prettyboy's laughter was surprisingly disturbing.

"I've found you... I've found you..." He muttered, as he put his hand upon the railing.

"I've finally found you..."

The steel railing crumpled easily under the strength of a single one of his fingers.

Meanwhile at the rooftop, the so-called couple had yet to break the silence.

"..."

"..."

A light wind blew through them.

And then,

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"Um..."

"Um..."

They spoke to each other at once.

"Oh!"

"Oh."

And they stopped themselves in unison.

"Go ahead."

"No, you first."

These two sure were in sync. In the old days, when two people said the same thing at the same time, whoever said "Jinx" last would have to shut up. Do they still do that? Please let me know.

That aside,

"You're not my boyfriend, right?"

Kino finally blurted out, face slightly pink.

"Yes. I know that." Shizu answered calmly.

They spent several seconds in silence.

"Oh! Thanks for your help just now."

"Think nothing of it."



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Kino and Shizu's conversation started. It took them this long to start a normal conversation. Kino, who had regained most of her calm, sighed heavily.

"I came here because we have a study period. If I'm bothering you, I'll just leave."

"You're not a bother at all. I like this place as well." said Shizu. He walked over to the edge and leaned against the newly-repaired railing. As a side note, he was currently skipping class, but no one said anything about it. In a sense, he was truly a free spirit.

Kino followed him to the railings and stood about 2 metres away from him.

Another moment of silence.

"Since then... I've been doing some thinking." Shizu blurted out suddenly, looking into the distance. It took Kino a second to understand what he was talking about.

"Oh..." Kino remembered the first time they spoke, on this very rooftop.

"Good for you."

"Yes, it's a good thing." Shizu nodded.

"Thinking, huh?" Kino quietly mumbled. She seemed to have something weighing on her mind.

"..."

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Shizu turned towards Kino, her profile framed against the sky.

"Is it my turn, then?" He asked half-jokingly.

"Huh? No, it's nothing. Don't worry about it!" Kino shook her head, flustered.

She could never tell him that she was responsible for defeating the demons that occasionally rampaged through the school, nor could she ever talk about the perverted masked man who would sincerely laugh as he worsened each situation.

So she talked about something else.

"Well... I'm just a little hungry. I wonder if they're serving curry udon at the cafeteria today... stuff like that. I guess the fact that I don't have anything weighing on my mind is what worries me? Hahaha."

This wasn't a complete lie--Kino was a firm believer in the tastiness of curry udon in the summertime.

"I see..." Shizu went back to staring into the distance, with a hint of relief on his face. "I also eat curry udon at the cafeteria sometimes. It's certainly delicious."

"Isn't it? The generous helpings of chicken and the inch-length green onion slices, and the minced ginger toppings are the highlight."

"Yes. Ginger contains zingerone, shogaols, and gingerols. These oils help maintain high body temperature and are good for your



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stomach. It helps prevent nausea and helps fight harmful bacteria. It also acts as an antioxidant."

"I don't really understand, but it sounds really healthy."

"Exactly. In addition, the spices used in curry help enhance one's appetite, and udon digests quickly enough that it provides energy for the body quickly."

"You're really smart, Shizu-senpai."

"I am a man who has dedicated his heart to the sword."

What's that supposed to mean?

In any case, these two, leaning against the railing and chatting together, looked like a couple, even to people other than Inuyama.

Even though they were talking about curry udon.

Even though their conversation occasionally went off the rails.

Meanwhile, a girl watched them from afar with a pair of binoculars. She was alone in the sports club's office all by her lonesome self. Her red cell phone had a strap with a bell attached to it. The Tasco high-end military-use binoculars (don't ask why they're there) in her hands were pointed straight at Shizu and Kino's smiling faces.

"..."

The girl's lips were pursed tightly. She ground her teeth. At that exact moment--

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"Do you hate her?" Asked a voice. The tiny club office was empty save for lost set of gym uniforms. It was a suspiciously disembodied male voice.

"Do you hate that girl?"

"I hate her." The girl answered firmly. So great was her anger that she didn't even care about the source of the disembodied voice. She again ground her teeth.

"I hate that model gun geek bitch... she had the nerve to turn down Inuyama, and now she's after the school's Prince Shizu..."

Kino wasn't particularly going after Shizu, but the girl had no way of knowing that. The binoculars in her hand trembled.

The mysterious voice spoke again.

"Do you want power?"

"What kind of power?"

"The power to make that model gun geek say, 'uncle'."

"Yes!" She answered immediately. Of course, no one these days ever says "uncle".

"Then I grant you this power!"

The moment the mysterious voice spoke--

Cracklecrunchcrack



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The high-end military use binoculars in the girl's hand crumpled like a piece of paper.

VOLUME 01



Chapter 2: The Annoying Guy is a Transfer Student, Woof! ~Before Dog Days~ (Part 2)

"It's almost time for the cafeteria to open. The other students will get there first if you don't hurry." Said the man with the katana. He was holding in his right hand an intricately crafted pocket watch. It was open this time, so the complex clockwork within was clearly visible through the glass backing. Where there would normally be a 6 spun a tourbillon.

"You're right. I'll be going now, then." Said Kino, as she bowed to her senpai. And as soon as she turned around--

Brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrring!

It was the emergency alarm. The ringing echoed throughout the school building, and was perfectly audible even on the rooftop, thanks to the speakers installed there.

"The emergency alarm." Shizu frowned and prepared to draw.

Kino, surprised, froze on the spot.

"Maybe there's a fire?" she asked. Despite the frequent demonic invasions, not once had the emergency alarm sounded in any of those cases. No one really had the chance to activate it.

"Anyway, we should get out of here." Said Shizu, quick to react. On a side note, anyone who ignores alarm bells and warnings or blows them off in this day and age won't live to be very old.

"Right." Kino nodded. From what she could see from the edge of the rooftop, a good number of students had fled to the grounds



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and the central gardens. She couldn't tell if they were frightened of the demon or if they were just happy to get out of class early.

"Let's go." Shizu approached Kino from beside her and began to escort her to the metal doors.

Those very metal doors were blown out of the doorway and thrown onto the rooftop.

"Huh?"

"Hmph!"

The heavy doors came to a stop on the ground right in front of them.

"Stand back." Shizu said harshly. It was a monster--yes, a creature that could only be described as a monster. It was about a metre in height and humanoid in shape, but it was covered in fur and had clawed hands. It looked kind of like a cross between a monkey and a bear, drawn by a really talentless artist.

"A demon?" Kino asked Hermes under her breath.

"Kind of, but they're different."

"What do you mean?"

"They're not the kind of demons that were originally human."

Just as Kino was about to ask Hermes to elaborate, her question was answered. More than one monster was responsible for the unexpected flight of the metal doors.

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"Huh?"

Identical monsters poured out of the stairwell, like navy-suited salarymen from a train in rush hour.

"These are the demon's underlings." Said Hermes.

"Then I can turn them to swiss cheese, right?"

"Yeah, but... you're planning to transform *here*? Besides, it'll be pretty dangerous for you to start shooting if you're not transformed."

"Ugh..." Kino fell silent. Shizu-senpai was also on the rooftop with her, and she couldn't let him find out that she was the hero that had been saving the school all this time. Those of you who've read chapter 1 would know that Kino had several pouches of firearms from her grandmother back home, but Kino couldn't just fire away without transforming first.

Shizu merely stood quietly, facing down the monsters--they had increased in number to about twenty.

"..."

"What do I do, Hermes? Shizu-senpai is in trouble!"

"Well, we could just wait until the monsters beat him halfway to death..."

"We can't do that!" Kino was a bit upset.

"Stay back. I'll be all right." Shizu was still very calm.



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The monsters approached Shizu in a semicircular formation. One of them let out a sharp cry, and the others used that as the cue to simultaneously charge Shizu.

"Come..." Shizu muttered. His left thumb slightly pushed out the katana from the scabbard. The silver blade shone under the sunlight.

"Haah!"

With a single cry, Shizu drew with his right hand at supersonic speed. The blade flashed again and again as Shizu moved too fast to see with the human eye. Only the katana's graceful arcs betrayed his actions.

Within two seconds, Shizu stopped moving, katana back at the ready position.

The fourteen monsters in front of them instantly dissolved into particles and scattered to the winds.

"Wow!" Kino exclaimed.

"He's pretty good." Hermes admitted.

The monsters who had just lost their allies flinched. Shizu muttered, "Come at me... I will turn you into dust."

Shizu and the monsters stared each other down in stillness, with the alarm bells as background music.

The moment the alarm ceased, another monster let out a roar. Immediately afterwards, the remaining ten monsters--did not charge Shizu.

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"Hmph!"

It was a feint. Only seven had attacked Shizu--the others sprinted fiercely and jumped over him, towards where Kino was standing.

"No you don't!" Shizu shouted, as he stepped towards the seven monsters approaching him and slashed. Four were chopped in half within 1.5 seconds, and the remaining three were cut down in one stroke as Shizu turned around in one smooth motion.

The three monsters that had jumped over Shizu charged Kino as soon as they hit the ground.

"Look out, Kino!"

"Argh, I don't care anymore. I'm just gonna shoot them." Kino, sweating, anxiously reached for the pouch with her right hand.

The monsters rushed at her in single file. Kino's fingers were two millimetres away from opening one of the pouches when the number of monsters increased to four--no, never mind. It was Shizu, who had appeared from behind the monsters.

"Haaah!"

Sliceslicewhooshwhoosh

Two glints and two slices. The two monsters in front of Shizu turned to dust and vanished. However, the third monster was right in front of Kino, arm raised and claws ready for mauling.

The monster, however, never got to swing down his claws. It stopped moving, courtesy of the katana impaled through its back. Behind it was Shizu, still in sword-throwing position.



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When the last monster disappeared, the katana fell to the floor with a clang.

"..."

Kino's right hand was frozen still over her gun pouch.

"That was close," Hermes whispered.

"Are you unharmed?" asked Shizu. He walked over as if nothing had happened, picked up his katana, shook off the dust, and sheathed it.

"Huh? Oh, yeah. I'm fine." Kino replied. Shizu smiled warmly and expressed his relief.

"This was the beginning of Kino's first love. It was a faint yet bittersweet emotion." Hermes began to narrate something strange. Kino crushed him in her left hand ("Grk!") and turned to Shizu.

"How about you, senpai? Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, but things aren't looking so good. It seems yet another one of those 'demon incidents' has begun." Said Shizu, perfectly calm and not at all out of breath despite his acrobatic feat moments earlier. Kino winced, remembering the fact that a demon was still running loose.

"R...right. Senpai, you should--" Kino was about to tell him to evacuate. After all, she was a transforming hero--she wanted to transform immediately and get things over with before the Masked Pervert could get in her way.

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However, she couldn't transform in front of Shizu-senpai. That's why she wanted to to leave.

As Kino struggled to properly phrase these thoughts,

"I have to go." Shizu spoke up first. *'Hell yeah!'* Kino thought. Of course, she didn't say this out loud.

"But it would be dangerous to leave you here alone..."

'Never mind, just get out of here.' was the next thought on Kino's mind, but she didn't voice it.

"I'll be fine! You should go ahead, senpai!"

"But..."

"The rooftop's clear, right? I'll just go hide in the corner. There's probably--no, definitely someone downstairs who needs your help!" Kino began rambling her line of thought.

"I see..." Shizu nodded strongly, as if he somehow understood.

"Liar, liar, pants on fire--grk!" Kino crushed Hermes in her grip again.

As if on cue, they heard an explosion and the sound of something collapsing. Kino and Shizu turned around in surprise, and saw smoke billowing out of the sports club's office, past the central gardens. A huge, terrifying monster over 5 metres tall appeared, small pieces of debris on its head.



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"! A demon...!" said Shizu. For the sake of narrative convenience, the small fluffy creatures will now be referred to as "monsters" and the big ones as "demons".

The demon let out a huge roar. It was a somewhat sorrowful voice. The windowpanes on the classrooms near the central gardens began shaking. The students who had evacuated into the central gardens scattered like insects.

"That's the demon you have to turn back to a human. Looks like they're getting bigger and bigger." Hermes whispered.

Kino was running out of patience--she wanted to transform. Shizu, however, did not budge.

He muttered things like, "So that's the creature that threatens the school's peace..." and "... then I shall become its protector..." and other such nonsense. Kino's honest feelings were, *'just go, already!'*.

No matter how strong she became after transforming, Kino was sure that a normal person like Shizu would only get in the way. He might even get hit by a stray bullet. Pervert Mask's interference was annoying enough, but getting Shizu involved might end up making things worse. Kino got a little depressed.

"If you find yourself in danger, make sure you escape, all right?" said Shizu, as he finally disappeared from the rooftop.

Kino slowly shook her head and looked down at the school grounds. The demon was no longer in the central gardens. Judging from the occasional tremors in the school building, it was probably rampaging through the school, breathing fire or something.

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"Okay, Kino. It's time for you to transform." said Hermes, finally allowed to speak at above-whisper level. Kino sighed heavily.

"What's wrong?" asked Hermes.

"I just remembered..." Kino had a very serious expression on her face.

"Remembered what?"

"I'm hungry..." Kino said wearily. Normally, she would have been eating her curry udon at the deserted cafeteria, if the curry udon was being served today (which it was). But now, the dormitory students who had all evacuated were taking advantage of the forced early dismissal to crowd the cafeteria and eat their lunches.

"Then just finish it off quickly."

"But I don't wanna..." Kino complained.

"If you don't turn that demon back, you won't get any lunch. If that thing happens to get to the cafeteria, you might end up eating nothing but convenience store food until summer break."

With Hermes' reminder, Kino resolved herself to protect the cafeteria from which she bought her meals (they were delicious).

"All right, Hermes! I'm transforming!"

"That's more like it!"

Kino drew her model gun from the holster. She released the hammer with her thumb and raised her right hand into the air. She stood with her feet apart, twisted her hips, leaned back slightly,



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and elegantly bent her left arm. She was the spitting image of John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*. Nice. Hm? You don't know the movie because it's too old? Google it.

It was now time for the transformation phrase. Kino said in a confident voice,

"From my cold! Dead! Hands!"

This was the transformation catchphrase. Special thanks to Mr. Cha**ton He**on (occupation: actor) from the US for sending an email saying, "Please use this for Pretty Kino's transformation phrase!".

The hammer struck the firing pin. The moment the sound of the igniting primer rang out, a bright light enveloped Kino's body.

Once the light had faded (there wasn't enough time this time, so I'm going with the short version)--

"Transformation complete! Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino!" Hermes announced. That's right--Kino was no longer Kino. Even though her sailor uniform, belt, pouches, and appearance was completely unchanged, Kino was now the beautiful warrior Kino! A defender of justice with superhuman senses and endurance. The model gun in her right hand had transformed into the anti-demon superweapon Big Cannon~ Shining Iron Demon Destroyer... kind of. It looked the same, but its powers had definitely changed.

"Let's go, Hermes!"

Kino would enter the battle in order to protect the cafeteria, her lunch, and specifically, her summer curry udon!

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Kino ran down the stairs in search of the demon.

The Big Cannon was a special weapon that could only be fired once every transformation, so Kino could only use it when she was absolutely sure she would not miss. She had placed it in the holster and was holding a gun from her pouch in her right hand--a P90.

The P90 was approximately 50 centimetres in length. It looked like a long, thin box, almost unlike a gun. It could fire about 50 continuous shots. At the end of the gun was a cylindrical silencer.

"Where are you...? I have to finish this quick and get my curry udon!"

Kino walked through the deserted halls. Her eyes were on fire--this was what they called 'the spirit of hunger'.

"Show yourself..."

"Huh? That way... I can feel its presence! Walk straight that way!" Hermes finally said something helpful. Kino looked straight at where she was aiming her P90 and silently stalked the halls.

"Upstairs. Up! And to the right. A little more--in that classroom!"

"But this is..." Kino went silent. The third floor classroom she entered at Hermes' instruction was--

"This is my classroom."

It was Kino's classroom.



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"It's definitely in there."

"..."

Kino took a deep breath and gripped the P90 tightly. Then--

BANG!

She did something that might have gotten her sent to the principal's office (or if she was unlucky, the police) if she wasn't already transformed. She had kicked down the classroom's sliding door.

The door flew across the classroom. The pane of glass in the door shattered. At the same time, Kino dashed into the classroom and aimed the gun at the demon--

"Huh?"

Kino stopped herself from pulling the trigger.

"Hey! What's going on?!" asked a confused Kino.

Inside the classroom was not a 5-metre tall demon, but a female classmate Kino saw every day. The girl, crouching on the floor, seemed to have been frozen in fear at seeing Kino violently burst into the classroom. Her wide eyes were staring directly at Kino.

"Huh? What are you doing here? Couldn't you evacuate in time?" Asked Kino, lowering her gun.

"I... I..." The terrified girl barely managed to speak, albeit in a trembling voice.

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"Don't worry! The demon's not around right now, so you can get away! I'll get you out--"

The moment Kino took a step towards the girl, Hermes shouted, "No, Kino! She's the demon!"

Kino stopped in her tracks, momentarily confused.

The next thing she saw was a punch to her own stomach.

"Kyaaa!"

Kino, punched in the stomach, was sent flying into the back of the classroom. The chalkboard she hit split in two, and several chairs and desks were knocked over as she fell to the ground.

The girl who had sent Kino flying with her stick-thin arm stood up and sneered.

"Hah! Serves you right, Mysterious Kino!" She said, with the speaking style of a middle-aged man.

"Don't shorten it like that..." Kino mumbled, still lying on the floor.

Then--

"Hiyaa!"

She pushed off the desks and chairs piled over her, got to her feet, and immediately took aim at the girl--no, the demon in girl's appearance.

The demon sneered. She had the face of a girl, but the smile looked quite evil.



GAKUEN KINO

"So you think you can shoot me, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino? Could you dare to shoot down your own classmate?"

"Yup."

Kino's answer was immediate.

She pulled the trigger without hesitation or mercy. She pumped the demon full of lead on automatic.

Ratatatatat! The sounds of gunfire were accompanied by bullets flying at supersonic speed. This particular gun could shoot 50 rounds per second. The countless shell casings danced on the floor.

The demon desperately tried to dodge. Several shots found their mark in its leg.

"Ugh!" It screamed in pain. The bullets, however, did not stop, let alone slow. The demon threw itself into the hallway, shattering the glass window. Stray bullets had torn apart several desks and a chalkboard.

"We're going after her, Hermes! I'm gonna finish this quick!"

The moment Kino leapt to her feet to chase the demon, however--

"I see you may need my help!"

She heard the most unwelcome voice ever from behind her. It was a handsome, clear voice.

"..."

VOLUME 01



Kino decided that she was just hearing things. It took her 0.008 seconds to decide to pretend to have heard nothing. *'I didn't hear that. This is not happening,'* she thought, and refused to even glance in the direction of the voice. She decided to leave the classroom immediately.

"When the maiden of justice finds herself in danger--"

Kino did her best to ignore this, telling herself that this could not be happening.

"A lone knight descends from the distant skies!"

A breeze.

With a cacophonous *whoosh*, a powerful gale swept through the classroom from the windows. The windowpanes shook violently.

"..."

Kino, having missed her chance to run out of the classroom, lowered her gaze. She shut her eyes and shook her head over and over again, as if refusing to acknowledge that this was actually happening. As soon as she turned around, HE would be there.

"Kino, behind you..."

"I know, Hermes."

Kino opened her eyes. She prepared herself and turned around with a scowl on her face.

A man was floating in midair.



GAKUEN KINO

A lone man was floating in midair, just outside the balcony.

He wore a white school uniform. A pocket watch hung out from his pocket, and a katana with a black scabbard was secured to his side. A silken white cape fluttered loudly from his shoulders.

"Dammit."

Kino sighed heavily, looking at the floating man.

He was probably a tidy-looking young man, but his eyes were covered by a white mask. It was pristine white, covering from his nose to his forehead. He wore sunglasses over his eyes. Atop his slightly long black hair were a pair of fluffy dog ears, and a bright red apple sat on the top of his head. A dove flew past him. In slow motion, at that.

The man was definitely floating in midair. Kino spotted a thin wire that hung from above. There was a metal wheel attached to the end of the wire--the man was standing on it and holding the wire with his right hand.

"Wahahahahaha! Here I come! Hiya!"

The man leapt onto the balcony giddily, and waved at the helicopter with the wire and wheel that was causing the galestorm.

"Thank you, helicopter! I owe you one for this amazing entrance!"

"..." Kino glared at him silently.

"Whoa! Oh, my back."

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The moment Samoyed Mask cleared the windowsill with a line more suited to an elderly man--

BANG!

Kino fired the P90 without hesitation. The bullet smashed the apple on Samoyed Mask's head.

"Oh! What a violent declaration of love, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino! You're embarrassing me."

The man nonchalantly opened his arms for an embrace.

"Shut up! Don't move an inch, you pervert! Even your *name* is annoying! You always get in my way and make everything worse! Do you have something against me, Samoyed Mask?!" Kino yelled, burning with rage. Samoyed Mask, however, merely tilted his head.

"Hm? What are you talking about?"

"What am I talking about?! You--" The moment Kino was about to berate him, however--

"I am not Samoyed Mask." He interrupted Kino.

"What?"

"Samoyed Mask--the man whose true name is Samoyed Mask, the Pure-White Knight of Justice--is no more..." The man muttered, raising his face slightly, looking into the distance--or perhaps the ceiling--and continued theatrically with lots of dramatic pauses.

"He has gone... to the great inbetween of the matryoshka."



GAKUEN KINO

No one would ever understand what this guy was talking about.

"Then who the hell are you supposed to be?!" It was an obvious question. The man grinned, showing off his pearly whites. Then he ostentatiously pulled back his cape with his left hand.

"That is a good question! I shall answer--I am 'The Missionary of the Blade, Love, and Truth, Samoyed Mask α!'"

Tada! Ta-tatata!

An upbeat song began to play. It was his entrance song, *'Oh, Our Missionary of the Blade, Love, and Truth, Samoyed Mask α, is Here to Protect Us All!'*. The showy prelude, instrumentals played by guitar, piano, saxophone, and drums, rang out through the classroom. The vocals soon began.

'Oh~ have you seen? His refreshing grin~ His fluttering cape~ Symbolizes justice~'. He was the vocalist of the song. He was admittedly quite the singer.

'He is a hero~ A true hero~ A bright-white comet that defends the school~ (spoken) I can't let Mysterious Kino take all the glory!'

"..."

Kino had an extremely annoyed look on her face.

Ratatatat!

She wordlessly opened fire with her P90. The cassette player at Samoyed Mask α's feet turned to non-burnable trash. The song immediately stopped.

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"Ack! That was not nice, Mysterious Kino! This was quite expensive... I worked halfway to death at a part-time job to earn enough money for one..." Samoyed Mask α crouched on the ground, as if on the verge of tears.

"Get serious!"

On one of the pieces of scattered plastic was a scribble that read, 'property of the music department'.

"What's with that 'blah-blah Samoyed Mask' name?! The only thing different is that pretentiously embarrassing letter you added!"

'Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino's pretty embarrassing too,' Hermes thought, but he didn't voice the opinion. Even though he was the one who made up her name in the first place.

In any case, our childish heroes continued to bicker.

"It's definitely different! Don't forget, I am Samoyed Mask α!"

"You're still Samoyed Mask, you pervert!"

"No! Don't forget the α!"

"Who cares?"

"Alpha--!"

"Shut up. What's with the helicopter, anyway?"

"Oh, I asked them for a quick ride, but they refused. So I hijacked it."



GAKUEN KINO

"That's illegal!"

"Anything goes for Justice."

"Why do you always have to be like that?!"

"That is a good question! It is because..."

"Because...?"

"My shining white cape! The skies--the azure skies. Let us dance with a smile, with open arms! Passionately! Freely! Childhood dreams, respect, and battles. Common logic--now! Oh, an eternal Fantasia! My side, canned food--A chord for every little twitch! The dawn we watched together that day... now do you understand?"

"You call that an EXPLANATION?!"

"You truly lack understanding."

"I'll shoot your face off!" Kino yelled, as she reached for Big Cannon.

"Control yourself. Remember, you only get one shot." Hermes stopped her calmly.

"Argh! Dammit, you perv! You'd better watch your back!" Kino yelled at the masked man. She then vaguely recalled that this wasn't the time for such things.

"Argh, this is so annoying... Let's pretend nothing happened and finish off the demon right now, Hermes! At this rate I'll starve to death!"

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"Yeah. Let's end things quickly."

The P90 was nearly out of ammo, so Kino put it back into the pouch and fished out a larger gun.

The gun was called an FN Minimi. It was a cute name, but it was a military-use machine gun 1 metre in length, with a crude-looking metal body and a large magazine attached to it. The gun weighed about 7 kilograms on its own, but it was light as a feather to the transformed Kino.

Kino came out into the hallway through the door she had kicked open. She aimed the Minimi at waist level and prepared to fire at any moment.

"Go straight ahead. I can sense its presence." Hermes instructed. Kino walked along the hall, towards the centre of the school building.

The sailor uniform(-clad Kino) and the machine gun walked the deserted halls. Samoyed Mask α followed after her.

"Stop following me!" Kino yelled, without even turning around.

"No. This time, it will be dangerous for you to go alone. You will need my help." answered Samoyed Mask α.

Just as an enraged Kino turned around to yell, "all you ever do is get in my way!"--

"!"

she felt a sudden sense of bloodlust.



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Kino stopped trying to argue with Samoyed Mask α and looked straight ahead.

"..." a serious look graced Kino's face. A single drop of cold sweat slid down her cheek.

"Can you feel it...? It's nearby..." Samoyed Mask α also turned his gaze and placed his hand upon the hilt of the katana, prepared to draw.

The long hallway was at the central area of the school building. Kino and Samoyed Mask α were at the very centre of the hall. There was nothing but solid wall to Kino's left, and her right was similarly blocked off, with the exception of the A/V room door.

"It's coming from over there." said Hermes.

"Can you figure out the distance, Hermes?"

"I can approximate."

"Good enough." said Kino. Hermes answered immediately.

"Approximately--30 metres. It's coming our way."

Kino gripped the Minimi tightly and checked with her finger to make sure that the safety was off. Even Samoyed Mask α was surprisingly refraining from idiocy and calmly preparing himself.

"25." said Hermes.

'Do your worst.' Kino muttered under her breath.

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"20... 18."

"Huh?" Kino was surprised. The hall was a dead end, and there were about 25 metres to the music room at the end of the hall. It was strange that the demon was still not visible.

"16!"

"Wait a sec, Hermes! I don't see it!"

"14!"

"Wha-?!" Kino was extremely confused. She turned around to look behind her just in case, but the hall was deserted.

"I got it!" yelled Samoyed Mask α. "What?" Kino asked him. At this point, she didn't care who gave her the answers, as long as she could figure out where the demon was.

"12!"

"Mysterious Kino! Your partner--"

"10!"

"What about him?"

"8!"

"Your partner has switched the unit of measurement from metres to kilometres."

"..."



GAKUEN KINO

"Or perhaps kilohertz?"

Kino immediately regretted putting even the slightest of her hopes on this idiot.

"6! 4! 2! And I'm still on metres!" Hermes announced. And then--

"1!"

The demon was finally at 1 metre. They should be practically next to one another. However, the hallway was empty save for Kino and Samoyed Mask α. So--

"Above us!" The masked man the first to notice. He drew at lightning speed, leapt into the air, stabbed the katana deep into the ceiling, and landed--poorly. This was because the ceiling collapsed over them. Samoyed Mask α, having lost his balance, was tossed to the end of the hallway.

"Huh...?"

Countless monsters spilled from the hole in the ceiling. They were the ones Kino had seen earlier on the rooftop.

"Below us!" Kino quickly stepped back and opened fire with the Minimi.

Ratatatatatatat!

The gunshots rang out sharply and rhythmically through the hall. The ammunition belt was practically sucked into the gun, and empty shells spewed out of the other end. The gun continuously blasted orange flashes of light.

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The bullets, moving at speeds of 900 metres per second, systematically annihilated the monsters. The ones that came from the hole in the ceiling were turned to dust instantly. However--

"There's too many of them!" Kino shouted. There was no end to the flow of monsters--they just kept coming like water from a broken water tap. It looked like they didn't even care that their brethren were being killed right beside them. The ones that managed to use their fellow monsters as meatshields and make it into the hall filled the area and approached Kino.

"This isn't good..." Kino muttered, stepping back. She fired continuously, moving the gun to the left and the right, but she wasn't making a dent in their numbers.

The Minimi would soon run out of ammo.

"Let's retreat for now, Hermes!" Kino shouted, still firing away.

"Sounds good. What about the mask guy? He's knocked out somewhere over there, right?" Asked Hermes, concerned about Samoyed Mask α.

"I'll write his parents a letter. 'Your son died honourably in battle'." Kino answered nonchalantly.

The gunshots suddenly stopped. The machine gun in Kino's hand had gone silent--it was out of ammo. A machine gun without ammo is about as useful as air conditioning during a blackout.

Immediately, Kino put the Minimi back into the pouch. However, it wouldn't fit in properly, so Kino turned the pouch upside down and poured out its contents onto the floor. She changed the placements of the firearms to make sure they would all fit, and fanned the



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superheated Minimi and cooled it so it wouldn't be burn-inducingly hot. She barely managed to fit everything neatly back in the pouch, close the lid, and put the pouch back on her belt. All of this took her 0.005 seconds.

Kino turned around and ran for her life. She was quite skilled at running away. Kino took out a dozen hand grenades from one of the pouches, pulled the pins, and tossed them behind her as she ran.

"Fire in the hole!" Hermes shouted excitedly. Twelve explosions in total rocked the hallway. The monsters chasing Kino scattered.

"Goodbye, Mask of Justice. I won't let your sacrifice be in vain. Probably." Kino's eyes were filled with zero tears as she escaped. Not even an iota of a bit.

"..."

The smoke from the explosions finally cleared. The walls, the ceiling, and the floor of the hallway was in ruins. A man in a white cape was lying face-down amidst the rubble. In his right hand was a broken katana.

"..."

The man was silent. He didn't even move--it was difficult to tell if he was even breathing.

The formerly pristine-white cape was tattered and stained with dust and smoke.

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About two dozen monsters that had survived the explosions surrounded the man. It didn't look like they would even need to land the killing blow.

Goodbye, Samoyed Mask α. Your bravery in the face of battle will remain in the hearts of the readers for all eternity.

Farewell, Missionary of the Blade, Love, and Truth, Samoyed Mask α! Farewell!

"Hmm? I was waiting for Mysterious Kino to come running back to rescue me, guns ablaze, shouting, 'I can't leave you behind! I understand now--I love you!'... you mean that's not happening?"

Nope.

"That's a bit cruel, don't you think? We're partners! We've fought together all this time!"

All you did was get in the way.

"Bonnie and Clyde from the film of the same name and Gordon and Shughart from *Black Hawk Down* were all based on us."

Are you trying to get me sued? All four of them were real people.

"But-but-but-"

This is getting annoying. If you keep acting like a baby, I'll cut Samoyed Mask α from the book.

"I guess I have no choice..." the man in the white cape muttered,



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as he stood up. The monsters around him roared in surprise. They immediately attacked him simultaneously.

A belligerent smile graced the masked man's lips.

"Hmph. This is child's play."

Sliceslicewhooshwhoosh

The katana flashed, its movement betrayed only by the sound of it cutting through the wind.

Only 1 second after Samoyed Mask α had swung his sword--

There was nothing but piles of ash around him.

Samoyed Mask α lightly shook the pristine silver katana to shake off the blood and sheathed it--wait, wasn't it just broken?

"Do not concern yourself with such trivial matters." He sheathed the katana.

He then uncrumpled his pristine white cape--wait, wasn't it just stained and tattered?

"Do not concern yourself with such trivial matters." He uncrumpled his pristine white cape.

"Hmm... where could Mysterious Kino have gone?" Samoyed Mask α mumbled, as he sniffed the air.

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"Sniff... sniff..."

Then, he turned in the direction Kino disappeared to.

"That way!"

What are you, a dog?

Kino and Hermes were in the fourth floor library. It was a space about three times the size of a normal classroom, with bookshelves that reached all the way up to the ceiling. Of course, it was deserted. Left behind on the desks were bags, books, pieces of paper with illustrations and stats, dice, pencils, and erasers.

"Looks like you've lost them for now." said Hermes.

Kino, who was sitting on the librarian's counter near the centre of the library with her legs swinging, sighed.

"Ohhh... I'm so tired. I'm hungry..."

The clock on the wall indicated that it was already halfway through lunch period.

"Things are a bit weird this time." said Hermes.

"It is, right?! Summoning all those monsters--that was really low."

"Yeah, that too. But..."

Kino looked up, surprised at Hermes' unusually serious tone.



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"What is it?"

"So far, the demons we've seen were just students succumbing to the temptation through stuff like stress and rampaging without much mental faculty. They went around randomly causing destruction, or tried to commit suicide. They were running away from you because you were turning them back to normal.

"Sounds about right. So what about this time?"

"It's different. This one's working towards something specific."

"Like...?" asked Kino. Hermes hesitated uncharacteristically.

"Its goal..."

Kino, surprised, lifted Hermes up to eye-level.

"What's it trying to do?"

"Its goal is..."

"Its goal is you, Mysterious Gun Fighter Rider Kino."

Samoyed Mask α was the one who answered Kino's question. He had just quietly slid open the library door and entered.

"Oh. you're alive. What's this about me being the demon's target?" Kino asked, with an unusually serious expression on her face.

Samoyed Mask α shut the door tightly and walked over to Kino silently. He then leaned against a desk in the young adult literature section, in front of the counter, and crossed his arms.

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"Simply put... it holds a grudge." said Samoyed Mask α.

"..."

For a moment, Kino went silent. Then she spoke up.

"Y-you mean someone in my class hates me enough to kill me?"

"That is correct." Samoyed Mask α answered seriously, as if he was a completely different person from before.

"No way..."

Da-Dun! (sound effect representing psychological shock)

Kino was terribly shaken. Certainly, she had stupefied others through her love of eating, but to be harboured a grudge against-- this was unthinkable by her standards.

Kino dejectedly turned her gaze to the library carpet.

"If you need a heart-to-heart, I'm here to listen." said Samoyed Mask α in a soft voice.

Kino did not look up.

"Maybe she shouldn't talk?" asked Hermes.

"It's for her own sake."

"I guess..."



GAKUEN KINO

Several seconds passed by in silence. Posted on the wall was a notice saying, 'Quiet in the library'.

"Even still..." Kino finally spoke. She raised her face. She didn't appear happy by any stretch of the word, but her eyes shone with stern determination. "Even still, I'm going to fight, win, and seal away that demon. Because if I don't..."

"If you don't...?" Samoyed Mask α asked optimistically. Kino's reply was full of energy.

"If I don't defeat that demon, I won't be able to eat my curry udon!"

Samoyed Mask α's lips curled into a satisfied smile. His sparkling white teeth glinted in the light.

"I expected no less from my partner, Mysterious Gun Fighter Rider Kino!"

Kino also smirked. "Nah, we're not partners." she didn't forget to refute the masked man's claim.

"All right. 'Those who don't work don't get to eat!' Let's do this!"

"Yes, the real battle begins now. Let us remember our previous fight and figure out a more effective battle strategy."

"Yeah!" Kino leapt off the counter and looked back upon the fight so far. She went over it over and over again.

"YOU'RE the one who messed it all up!" Kino yelled, as she kicked the man standing before her.

"It's not very courteous to blame others." said Samoyed Mask α as

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he dodged with a laugh. The desk that Kino's kick landed on was heavily dented. About two hundred books fell from one of the shelves.

A loud explosion sounded, as if swallowing the sound of the falling books.

"Hmph!"

"It's here!"

They both reacted at once, turning their sights to the hole in the left end of the ceiling. Samoyed Mask α prepared to draw, and Kino took out a shotgun from her pouch--a pump-action Winchester M189 trench gun. She loaded the cartridge and got into firing position, like Benedict or the man in black from a certain light novel.⁵ Well, it's the same gun, for starters.

Once again, fur-covered monsters swarmed into the library from the hole in the ceiling.

"There'll be no end to this if we fight them head-on. It will be easier for us to strategically retreat and defeat the demon that's behind all this." said Samoyed Mask α.

"Agreed. For once." said Kino.

"All right, then. We will escape via the balcony on the right side of the library." the moment Samoyed Mask α said this, however, the right ceiling of the library broke with a crash. Unsurprisingly, monsters swarmed out from there as well.

⁵ Reference to another one of Sigsawa Keiichi's light novel series, *Allison*.



GAKUEN KINO

"Huh?" "Huh?" Kino and Samoyed Mask said at once. They were surrounded.

There was nowhere to run. The monsters slowly made their way to the counter.

"This is... what do we do now?"

"This is.... trouble." Samoyed Mask answered.

"Yeah."

"When the maiden of justice finds herself in danger..."

"That guy in the mask is going to help, right?" Kino found herself actually expecting something from the man standing beside her.

"SOMEBODY PLEASE SAVE US!" Samoyed Mask screamed at the top of his lungs. Kino scolded herself for putting the tiniest bit of trust in him.

But this was definitely a dangerous situation. Things weren't looking too good for Kino.

She looked around. Countless monsters surrounded her in all directions. The only one who might have been able to help had proven himself to be a useless waste of space.

If she were to push Samoyed Mask into the mass of monsters and use him as a stepping stone to launch herself towards the door, 8 metres away, Kino might have a chance to escape.

"It's a good a plan as any..." she muttered.

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The monsters drew nearer. Kino and Samoyed Mask α stepped back and found themselves standing with their backs to the counter.

"Aha!" Samoyed Mask α cried, as if he had just had an epiphany. His gaze was fixed upon some dice and papers scattered on one of the desks. He took a deep breath and shouted--

"T-! R-! P-! G-!"

Samoyed Mask α was the kind of man who would never lose his unbelievable sense of humour even in times of peril.

"You idiot! Don't scare me like that!" Kino smacked Samoyed Mask α with her palm. "You do that again, and I'll shoot your ear off!"

"I'm sorry."

Even as the two continued to banter, the number of monsters had increased and closed in. The library was full of them--it was 80% monster and 20% floor. At this point, they couldn't see the carpet.

"Danger levels increasing." said Hermes. He was right.

Samoyed Mask spoke up. "Mysterious rest omitted Kino. Leave this place to me and go--I shall fall today to secure your future. I would gladly accept this end." they were honourable words shining with heroism.

"That's what I've actually been thinking for a bit now. But... it's gonna be pretty hard at this point..." Kino's answer was merciless.

The monsters were less than 3 metres away from them now. Cold



GAKUEN KINO

sweat ran down their backs. Would this be the end of Gakuen Kino? It's only been two chapters. Kino, Samoyed Mask α, and the author, had just begun to worry. But suddenly--!

BANG!

It was the sound of the heavy library door being kicked down. Kino and Samoyed Mask looked up.

The door flew into several of the monsters and turned them into pancakes. A lone man stood before the doorway.

He was dressed in black. Black boots, black pants, black trenchcoat, black gloves--he was clad in black from head to toe. The sunglasses that obscured his slightly lowered face were also black.

His hair, however, was white. It was pristine, like the colour of freshly fallen snow. His long white hair was pulled back into a tight ponytail.

He wasn't very tall. He could probably get away with being called a student at this very school.

"..."

The man stood at the doorway empty-handed, feet apart, arms down at his sides, and still as a sculpture.

"Hey, it's dangerous here." warned Kino. Monsters were everywhere--did this guy come here, knowing that?

"That man... that coat... It can't be!" exclaimed Samoyed Mask α. At the same time, one of the monsters let out a howl. As if on cue, the other monsters charged at the young man at the door.

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Oh, it's all over for him. The poor young man who had come to the library to read a book after eating lunch would surely be torn to shreds. The moment Kino thought all this, however--

Whoosh! Swoosh!

The man merely swung his arms downward. A black mass appeared from each of his coat sleeves. They were guns--a pair of identical guns emerged from the sleeves and found themselves in his grip. All this happened in an instant, almost like magic.

"Those are Uzis."

Just as Kino said, the guns were Uzis--a type of Israeli submachine guns. The metal collapsing stock had been removed. It was about 50 centimetres in length. It was about 30 centimetres in height because of the magazine sticking out of the bottom. If you thought, "Wait a sec, how did guns that big fit in his sleeves?" please don't think about it too hard.

The man with the Uzis and the power of 40 9mm bullets slowly raised his head. He had a youthful face. The white hair, the slim face, and the pitch-black sunglasses faced Kino and Samoyed Mask a.

The moment the monsters finally made to strike the young man, he made his move.

He crossed his arms in front of his face at supersonic speed. It looked kind of like he was trying to cover his face, but that wasn't it. He was aiming to the left with the gun in his right hand, and aiming to the right with the one in his left.



GAKUEN KINO

Ratatatatatat!

The two guns fired at once--the monsters disintegrated before the shells scattered to the floor.

The young man spread his arms wide. He moved so quickly that it looked as if his arms had teleported instantaneously from their prior position. He pulled the trigger again. The gun in his right hand took down the monsters above him and the gun in his left fed bullets to monsters behind him on his right. Monsters were turning to ash in spades.

The ensuing battle looked eerily like a well-choreographed, robotic dance. The boy instantly shot down monsters approaching from all 360 degrees--even those coming from above--without taking a single step. He took them down systematically, starting with the ones nearest to him. The moments when he aimed squarely at each monster and pulled the trigger were the only times his movements were clearly visible. The afterimage of his arms, the guns, and the ensuing gunsmoke gave the boy a vague resemblance to the *senjukannon*⁶.

"..."

Kino was dumbstruck by the sight.

"*Namuabita butsu, kanzeon bosatsu*⁷." Samoyed Mask a chanted the Buddhist sutra.

⁶ *Senjukannon* seems to be a benevolent thousand-armed Buddhist deity.

⁷ *Namuabita butsu, kanzeon bosatsu* is a common Buddhist sutra.



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The young man continued to shoot down the hordes of monsters.

Oh, wait! The Uzi in his right hand had run out of ammo. In an instant, the young man released the magazine catch, dropping the empty magazine onto the carpet. He bent his right arm 90 degrees towards the floor, and another magazine fell from his sleeve and was loaded onto the gun. He had 40 additional shots he could make. The young man fired away with his right and reloaded the gun in his left hand. He left himself no openings--the young man just kept firing.

After the battle, it came to light that all of this took only four seconds.

The gunfire ceased and the Uzis disappeared back into his sleeves. By the time the young man had returned to his initial *senjukannon*-like pose, the library was clear of monsters.

The last shell dropped onto a desk with a high-pitched *ting*.



Chapter 2: The Annoying Guy is a Transfer Student, Woof! ~Before Dog Days~ (Part 3)

When the last of the shell casings had rolled to a stop, the library was overcome by silence.

The sign on the wall that had previously read, "Quiet in the library" was so riddled with bullet holes that it now read, "It usually rains on the plains in the library".⁸

"A--" Kino, who had been staring in wide-eyed shock, began applauding. "Amazing!"

Whoever this guy was, he had rescued Kino from certain death. He was definitely someone that she could count on.

"..."

The young man looked at Kino silently. Kino's face was reflecting off his sunglasses.

"That was so cool! That thing you just did, with the *whoosh*, and the *ratatat*, and the other *whoosh*! It was amazing! How'd you do it? Who taught you?"

"To think I would live long enough to see this technique with my own two eyes..." Samoyed Mask muttered like an old man, standing next to an excited Kino.

"You actually know what that was?"

⁸ This is likely a gag involving the original Japanese characters for "Quiet in the Library".

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"The Septuple-Gun Fist Style."⁹ Samoyed Mask answered, as he nodded seriously.

"What's that?"

"The Septuple-Gun Fist Style..."

It is the pinnacle of the fist-fighting style, the ultimate in close-range combat techniques. Its base and philosophy is to dodge attacks and position oneself in the most effective attacking stance by predicting the movements of the enemy through careful analysis of past battle experiences--then attacking mercilessly with guns held in each hand.

Its name comes from the fact that 'possession of guns and mastery of this style will increase the user's capacity for battle sevenfold'.

According to a recent supercomputer analysis, learning this technique will increase attack power by 120 percent (in comparison to prior stats), and even in times of stress, such as illness or angst, there is still an increase of up to 60 percent.

Like other martial arts, it is said that this style originated in China, but details are sparse. As some of you may have guessed from the name of this technique, its first appearance in recorded history goes back to Prince Shotoku(聖徳太子).

⁹ The original kanji is 銃七乗拳法: I took some liberties with translating this name.



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The incident when Prince Shotoku instantly defeated ten assassins sent after him is a well-known historical event--and it would have been impossible had it not been for this technique. His name, you see, was originally spelt '将秃对死'¹⁰--meaning that even a seasoned general old enough to be bald will die in battle against him. That is how great a man he was. The name 聖徳太子 was given its current spelling in modern times. They say that his reputation made its way into the rest of the world through the Silk Road. Even those living in the Irish countryside would tremble at his name. It's a well-known fact that Alfred Nobel invented dynamite out of fear of Prince Shotoku.

The gun that Prince Shotoku had used all his life, the *Kureirikugan*¹¹ (a phrase from a poem that means 'be courteous to your old friends. Even if he is far away, run to his side and do what he asks'), was cutting-edge for the time period. It's currently on display at the Arashiyama Museum in Kyoto. A pair of dragons have been carefully sculpted onto the wooden barrel, which hints at an early form of entasis. The grip is made of ivory sculpted in the shape of a phoenix, and the paper cartridge is studded with jade. It is an intricate piece of art. Along with the Tamamushi-nozushi at Houryuu Temple in Nara, and the Tenjukoku Shuuchou Mandala at Chuuguu Temple, it is one of the priceless artifacts of the Asuka Period.

Due to the influence of Buddhism, the black trenchcoat worn in battle by a master of this style was called a "Monk's Robe". It was an ultra-rare item that only the twelve most accomplished practitioners could acquire, either through internet auction or mail-order.

¹⁰ The kanji 聖徳太子(Prince Shotoku) and 将秃对死 are homonyms. The latter phrase likely means exactly what Samoyed Mask α claims it means.

¹¹ Kureirikugan(久禮離驅願) is a homonym for the Japanese pronunciation of 'cleric gun'.

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From "The History of Guns and Japan ~ Guns! People Die When They Are Shot", from Minmei Publishing Company." Samoyed Mask α expositied in reply to Kino's question.

The young Septuple-Gun Fist Style user stood motionlessly this whole time. His mouth didn't even twitch. It was almost as if the boy had no emotions.

"Huh. I don't really get it, but it sounds pretty awesome."

"Yes. I must confess that this is my first time seeing a Septuple-Gun Fist Style successor in person."

Samoyed Mask α turned to the boy and declared, "Nice to meet you! I am The Missionary of the Blade, Love and Truth, Samoyed Mask α! This is my partner, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino! We are nice people with an infinite passion for justice who will use every dirty trick in the book to keep this school safe!"

"We're not partners." Kino added.

"I admit we were in a bit of a sticky situation, but it was nothing we couldn't handle. We didn't need your help, but I appreciate that you saved us. Danke Schöen!"

Samoyed Mask α's attitude had done a 180 from before. No one would know if he was treating the newcomer like an idiot or if that was his own little way of greeting him.

"Successor of the Septuple-Gun Fist Style! I beseech you, tell us your name!" Samoyed Mask α demanded. What could this cool new character be called?

"My name is--" the young man spoke for the first time. He had a clear, boyish voice.

He repeated himself once more, and added tersely--

--Detective Wanwan."

Detective Wanwan.

Detective Wanwan.

Detective Wanwan.

"Detective Wanwan'? Oh, what a hideous name." said a dumbfounded Samoyed Mask α.



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"Speak for yourself!" Kino yelled, as she kicked Samoyed Mask with all her strength.

"Ouch."

Samoyed Mask α was mercilessly sent flying headfirst into an encyclopedia on the shelf. Kino ignored him and extended her thanks to Detective Wanwan.

"Thanks for saving me, Detective Wanwan." She folded her hands and bowed.

"...oh. I..." Detective Wanwan was at a loss, as if this was the first time he'd ever spoken to a girl. He had a look of embarrassment and anxiety.

Kino smiled at the shy Detective Wanwan. He looked even more bashful than ever. Oh, it's good to be young.

"No need to thank me. After all, it is my duty to fight evil."

Detective Wanwan said serenely.

"Still, thanks. You know what? I have to go now and seal away the demon that's controlling all these monsters. So I'm gonna ask you to do something for me. Can I trust you with it?"

Detective Wanwan silently but energetically nodded at Kino's request. The sunglasses went from reflecting Kino to Samoyed Mask α on the ground with his head against the encyclopedia, and back to Kino. On a side note, a flock of tiny chicks were circling Samoyed Mask α's masked, dog-eared head.

"Then I need you to make sure this pervert doesn't get in my way!"

"?"

While Detective Wanwan was still taken aback, Kino went ahead with her plan.

"Hermes, transform!"

"All right!" the cell phone strap on Kino's belt replied, as he rose into the air and was covered by a bright light.

When the light had faded, an offroad motorcycle had appeared in the library. Hermes had transformed. Kino got on, pushed the kick starter, and started the engine.



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"I'm counting on you!" Kino smiled, and left. She drove straight over the piles of scattered books, and out the door that Detective Wanwan had kicked down.

"Oh! That was close."

She nearly crashed into the wall because she was going so fast, but let's give her the benefit of the doubt and call it a cutesy moment.

"..."

Detective Wanwan silently watched Kino leave in the ensuing duststorm.

"I sense it! The demon's on the rooftop!"

"Got it! I'm not gonna let it get away this time!"

Kino and Hermes raced through the hall and up the stairs. Allow me to remind you to always wear your helmet when you're on a motorcycle. If you fall, you're in big trouble.

"..."

Meanwhile, in the library, Detective Wanwan silently looked down upon the unconscious Samoyed Mask α. The number of chicks had decreased slightly, but Samoyed Mask α was still unmoving.

Whoosh! Swoosh!

Detective Wanwan lightly waved his arms downwards and took hold of the PPSH-41 submachine guns that came out of his sleeves. It was an Old Soviet Union-made submachine gun. Because of the wooden stock that would normally be placed on the shoulder, the gun was about 84 centimetres in length. It's very long. There was a cylindrical drum magazine near the middle and it held 71 rounds--hmm? What do you mean, he's using a different gun? It doesn't really matter.

Detective Wanwan slowly raised his arms.

The two PPSH-41s were aimed squarely at the back of Samoyed Mask α's head.



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"To think... the chance would come so soon..." muttered Detective Wanwan. You couldn't tell because he was wearing sunglasses, but he was probably glaring at Samoyed Mask α.

"How long have I awaited this moment...?"

From the way he was talking, it seems Detective Wanwan knew who Samoyed Mask α was.

"I was disappointed in you."

It seems he was disappointed.

"You've fallen far."

It seems he had fallen far.

"And that is why... I will terminate you."

Termites are scary.

"This planet... shall be your grave."

Detective Wanwan slowly put pressure on his index fingers.

"Die, stupid samurai!"

Ratatatatatatatatatatatatat!

"Huh?"

Kino stopped Hermes on one of the landings along her way upstairs. She looked back in the direction of the library.

When Hermes asked her why she stopped, Kino thought for a moment before giving an answer.

"Nothing. Must have been my imagination."

Kino looked ahead and prepared to continue climbing.

"I thought I heard someone calling my name..."

Kino headed to the next floor and disappeared from the landing.

A refreshing summer breeze swept through the deserted landing.

A lone dove sat on the handrail. Where could it have come from?

The dove would remain perched there, as if it had lost someone it could fly past.

Forever...

Gakuen Kino Chapter 2: Farewell, Samoyed Mask/Samoyed Mask α! On to an Eternal Journey. Goodbye!

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The End!

Thank you for reading, everyone! Please look forward to Sigsawa Keiichi's next project!

• Notice from the Editorial Department--Name the Dove!

We're taking suggestions for the name of the dove that appeared at the end of this story. The entries will be judged by Sigsawa Keiichi and Amesawa Megumihajime.

Instructions: Please write the name on a piece of paper (under 11 characters, one entry per person, no purchase necessary), put it in your right pocket, and send a telepathic signal to the eastern sky.

"'John' sounds like a good name! John... John! Also, that's *Mister Stupid Samurai* to you, you rascal." said Samoyed Mask α.

"What?!" Detective Wanwan turned around, an astonished expression on his face (note: he is still wearing his sunglasses). He was just about to leave the library, having put the PPSH-41s back into his sleeves, turned his back towards Samoyed Mask α's prone form, and having meticulously fixed the door he had kicked open.

"Maybe 'John' isn't such a good idea? Then how about--"

"How did you survive that...?"

Detective Wanwan's confusion was well-founded. The carpet in front of the counter was stained crimson, and what seemed to be disgustingly pinkish body tissue was scattered over the floor. Not only that, Samoyed Mask α was covered in red from head to chest. Of course, even his cape.

Samoyed Mask α stood up. A single drop of red liquid ran down his chin.

"Well now, Detective Wanwan. Do you know of a vegetable called the tomato? It is known by some to be a fruit. As a side note, it is pronounced 'tomato' in some parts of the world, with a long A sound. Just as they say that 'A tomato a day keeps the doctor away', it is full of essential nutrients for a healthy lifestyle. The



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soluble fibre known as pectin not only helps prevent constipation, but it may also assist in preventing diabetes."

"It can't be... you mean that these red things are tomatoes...?"

"That is correct. The instant you shot me, I turned my body into a tomato."

Quit joking around. Not even a pervert like you can do something like that.

"I'm sorry. What I actually did was block each individual shot with a small tomato I produced from my pocket. It is nothing amazing once you've learned the trick."

No. It's quite amazing.

"..."

Even Detective Wanwan was at a loss for words. As a side note, he had mercilessly pumped Samoyed Mask a full of lead with all 142 bullets.

As Detective Wanwan stood there in shock, Samoyed Mask a began to clean himself up. He produced a silken handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his tomato-stained cape and uniform clean. He was soon back to his pristine white self.

"Well, now..."

His teeth sparkled under the white mask.

"Judging from everything you've said so far, it seems you know me well, Detective Wanwan. And you also despise me."

Detective Wanwan, who had finally regained his cool, nodded quietly.

"Unfortunately, it seems you are under the wrong impression. I am not the man you hate."

"How do you know that?"

"It is because..."

"Because...?"

"It is because my transformation is so perfect that no one could ever figure out my true identity!"

"..."

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"What I mean to say is-- I merely bear a coincidental resemblance to the man you hate. Today doesn't seem to be my lucky day, being nearly murdered for such a trivial reason."

"... Looks like talking isn't going to get us anywhere. May I continue pursuing my goal?" asked Detective Wanwan.

"As a man who loves justice, I cannot say I enjoy being involved in a battle to the death because of a case of mistaken identity--but I suppose I have no choice." Samoyed Mask α replied, preparing his katana.

Whoosh! Swoosh!

Detective Wanwan wordlessly waved his arms. In his hands appeared a pair of P90s, the same gun that Kino had used earlier--these didn't have silencers, however.

There were about 5 metres between the two opponents in this ruined library.

"Round two, is it? Now that I am out of tomatoes, it seems I will have to use my katana." Samoyed Mask α said merrily.

"This is the *final* round. You will now learn that anyone who wastes food will not die a peaceful death." Detective Wanwan corrected Samoyed Mask α.

"All right then, gun-wielding fist-style user. I hope you can at least keep me entertained."

"Of course. The lovely lady's waiting, so I hope you'll take this entertaining memory with you to hell."

Samoyed Mask α and Detective Wanwan drew/aimed at nearly the same time.

And--

Kino and Hermes emerged from the stairwell and into the sunlight.

"Found it!"

Just as Kino said, the 5-metre tall demon stood there as if it had been waiting for her.



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Kino immediately braked. The rear wheel rotated to the side and brought Hermes to a skidding stop. Kino pointed at the demon with her right hand.

"I've found you! Stand down and receive your punishment!"

"Were you watching an historical drama last night?" Hermes asked quietly.

The demon roared and thrust forth its arms, as if it had been waiting for this moment. It was burning with determination.

"Do your worst, Devour-ette!" Hermes spoke on behalf of the demon. Kino punched Hermes's fuel tank.

"Ouch."

Kino opened one of her pouches and took out a Spanish-made M87. It was a large automatic pistol, weighing over a kilogram. She didn't have a specific reason for choosing this gun--it just happened to be at the top of the pouch.

"Let's do this, Hermes!"

Kino took the gun in her left hand, hit the gas with her right, and stepped down on the gear lever with her left foot. The rear wheel spun on the spot for a moment, but it propelled Hermes forward in an instant.

"Grrrrrowwr!" The monster roared.

The battle had begun on this rather cramped rooftop.

Meanwhile, on the other end--

The battle between the perverted samurai and the embarrassingly-named boy in black had continued in a different location. At the moment, they were in the midst of messily scattered desks in the large, cluttered faculty office.

In the library, immediately after the battle had begun, Samoyed Mask α blocked a barrage of shots from Detective Wanwan's P90 with his katana. Detective Wanwan began stepping back while firing. Then his back hit the door he had just repaired.

"There's nowhere to run!"

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Samoyed Mask tried for a horizontal slash. However, this was exactly what Detective Wanwan had been aiming for. Detective Wanwan launched himself into the air with ease, evaded the slash, and landed a kick to Samoyed Mask α's face with both his feet. He propelled himself from the attack and tackled the newly-repaired door with his small frame.

"And I worked so hard to repair it, too..." Detective Wanwan muttered, as he threw himself into the hallway. He rolled and came to a controlled landing, got up, and fled down the stairs to buy himself some time.

"Hmph. Not too shabby." Samoyed Mask α mumbled. He began chasing after Detective Wanwan. His nose was bleeding comically. Having relocated to the faculty office, Detective Wanwan took out a pair of Beretta M12 submachine guns from his sleeves. He took a seat with his back to the desk of Nishizaki-sensei, the math teacher. For reference, here's some info on the M12. Full length: approx. 40cm. Machine gun, 40 9mm rounds. There is a grip near the front for ease of use, but Detective Wanwan doesn't use it.

A shadow passed over the windows between the office and the hallway.

"Found you! Ready or not, here I come!" said the shadow, as if playing a game of tag. With a *whoosh* and a *swoosh*, the door fell to pieces (nine of them, to be specific) and Samoyed Mask α entered the faculty office. Why couldn't you just open the door, like a normal person?

Detective Wanwan rose to boldly face his foe.

"To think, this faculty office would be the end of the line." Samoyed Mask α said a vaguely familiar line¹².

"This isn't a faculty office--this is a grave. A grave for both of us--is what I might say, but sorry. You're on your own." Detective Wanwan was playing along surprisingly well. However, the way

¹² I have no idea what this line references. Any ideas?



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these lines went, Samoyed Mask α would be the villain. Well, that doesn't really matter.

"All right."

Samoyed Mask α raised his katana in the attack position.

"Do your worst."

Detective Wanwan crossed the Berettas in front of his face.

The battle began in the following instant.

Let's see here... Since they're in the faculty office, test papers were sent flying, half-empty coffee mugs were shattered by bullets, and photographs of previous principals were destroyed in the battle, but...

"How about this?!" (Samoyed Mask α)

"That's not going to work!" (Detective Wanwan)

Bang! Bang! Whoosh!

Hey. You guys are moving too fast for me to describe anything properly. Slow down a bit.

"Is that all you've got?" (Samoyed Mask α)

"From the left, huh?!" (Detective Wanwan)

I said, slow down! Let's see... the guy that talked just now was Samoyed Mask α? I thought I saw the katana flash... Detective Wanwan blocked with the Beretta in his right hand--or is it his left? He blocked with the left... Argh, hold it, Samoyed Mask α! You're still going too fast!

"Take this!" (Samoyed Mask α)

"Haah!" (Detective Wanwan)

Clang! Clang! Swoosh! Ratatatat!

Then... dammit, screw this. Samoyed Mask α and Detective Wanwan were moving too fast for the eye to follow. The cluttered faculty office became even messier. The walls were destroyed by a hailstorm of bullets.

"Now, see here! I need you to describe my actions in proper detail!" (Samoyed Mask α)

"Mine too!" (Detective Wanwan)

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You're both too fast. Maybe I'll get some description done if you would slow down.

"There are no brakes for true battles. You are a truly lousy author."
(Samoyed Mask α)

"I agree." (Detective Wanwan)

Dammit!

Shut your mouths, both of you! The narration doesn't just include actions--it includes descriptions of your psychological state! In other words, your thoughts and actions are all under my control!

"Who cares?" (Samoyed Mask α)

"A third-rate author like you doesn't have any right to complain."
(Detective Wanwan)

"What do you say to getting rid of him first?" (Samoyed Mask α)

"Sounds like a good idea. We don't need narration." (Detective Wanwan)

What did you just say?! Did you just insult the power of narration? You're going to turn against your own author?!

"Yes."

"Yes."

...

Fine, then! Bring it on! They say that "The pen is mightier than the sword"! I'll show you that fictional characters are nothing without the power of the author at the computer! A single keystroke and I'll have defeated you both!

"Hyaaaaah!"

"Haaah!"

What's going on? I can't see anything.

Huh...? I don't--

But... I'm...

The author...

Wha...?



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"Well now, Detective Wanwan. Now that we've taken care of the unexpected intruder, shall we return to our bloody duel to the death?

I, Samoyed Mask α, lightly shook off the blood from the katana that had slain the author, and faced Detective Wanwan, my mortal enemy. It has been a long time since I have faced such a powerful foe, but of course, I could never lose."

"Let's continue this fight.

I, Detective Wanwan, threw aside the Berettas that had shot the author and produced from my sleeves a pair of Bullpup Bushmaster submachine guns. My foe deflects bullets with his katana, so I had no choice but to utilize the 5.56mm SCHV (Small Caliber/High Velocity) and its extreme speed."

"En garde! Haaaaaah!

With a sharp cry, I jumped over Goto-sensei's desk. Goto-sensei is a middle-aged history teacher. I chose his desk because it is relatively well-organized, as per his scrupulous personality. In other words, his desk is a perfect stepping stone. If you can't deduce all this within a moment's notice, it's best you never fight in a faculty office. I used my momentum as I fell to make a diagonal slash from Detective Wanwan's left. How will he counter?"

"From the left!

As soon as I deduced the direction and method of his attack, I ran through the statistical probabilities in my mind and figured out the approximate attack pattern. If I were to remain still, the sword would cleave me from my left shoulder all the way down to my right side. I moved without wasting a single millimetre's worth of energy. My feet were fixed to the spot. I put 70% of my weight on my right foot and prepared to relax it at any moment. I raised my left arm parallel to the ground, opened my arm 140 degrees, and bent my wrist at a 20 degree angle. Now I was in position to block the katana with the Bushmaster's main body, its most sturdy part. As Samoyed Mask α is physically larger than I, he would try to knock me off my feet immediately. Then I would quickly relax my

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right foot and syphon all the impact away from myself and throw Samoyed Mask α off-balance, giving me a 0.002 second opening. His next view will likely be down the barrel of the Bushmaster in my right hand, 12 centimetres from his face, and a flash of light."

Clang!

"Not bad, Detective Wanwan.

The moment I saw the sparks from the katana's impact against the gun, I realized that my attack had failed. Detective Wanwan had read the arc of my blade perfectly and prepared a counterattack. There was no need to continue with my plan when it had already failed--I put all my strength into the katana, but not in order to throw Detective Wanwan off his feet. A man of his skill level would have no trouble seeing through such an attack. A duel is also a battle of wits--one must see through the foe's lies and pierce the truth. I had put all my power into the blade in order to use the momentum from his block to rotate my body."

"I knew it! The impact on my left arm proved that my theory was correct. Soon my enemy would be bound for the great beyond. However, just as I was about to relax my right foot, I heard the faint sound of Samoyed Mask α's cape fluttering. Why? Such a thing could never happen if he had been planning to knock me down. I see--I put my weight on my right foot again. If I broke formation now, it would be all over!"

"Hahahaha! The fantastic dance of the elegant white knight. Oh, Samoyed Mask α roams the faculty office with his phenomenal athletic skills. How marvellous! The fluttering cape is like the wings of a swan. *He is a hero~ A true hero~ A bright-white comet that defends the school~* I began to sing my second theme song without even realizing it. It was unfortunate that I didn't have a cassette player for the instrumentals. It seems I will be raiding the choir room next time. Of course, first I have to defeat Detective Wanwan. Here's my next attack. Hyah!"

"Ugh--is this some sort of psychological attack? Samoyed Mask, who had sung an odd song with his amazing singing voice and



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jumped over me, rotated himself forward and used the momentum to slash with his sword. The blade was slicing up from the floor. If I had aimed the Bushmaster in my right towards the left as I had originally planned, my right arm would have been severed. *Clang! *Sparks** This time, I felt an impact on my right arm."

(Note: From this point on, Amesawa Megumihajime will be taking over in place of Sigsawa Keiichi, who was taken out by Samoyed Mask α and Detective Wanwan.)

Whoosh! Boom!

Samoyed Mask α, who had swung after spinning thrice in midair, left Goto-sensei's desk and landed on Mr. Baker's desk in another row. The picture frame with a photograph of his smiling wife and baby was broken to bits. As a side note, Mr. Baker was the English Speaking Class teacher from Missouri, recognizable by his golden beard.

Samoyed Mask α turned to Detective Wanwan and lowered his katana to guard against gunfire.

"You..."

It was not a bullet, however, that flew at Samoyed Mask α, but words. Detective Wanwan had lowered both his hands and was glaring at Samoyed Mask α from under his sunglasses.

"You have so much strength, yet..."

"What is this, Detective Wanwan? Praising me now won't make me go easier on you."

Detective Wanwan shook his head many times, as if he couldn't understand.

"Stop running away!" Kino shouted as she drove Hermes and fired the M87 with her left hand. The demon, despite being peppered with gunfire, turned away and ran across the rooftop. It then ran behind the rectangular structure that housed the stairwell.

"You're not getting away!" Kino yelled, and gave chase. Just as she and Hermes made it to the back of the structure--

"Huh?"

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The demon's gigantic hand appeared before her.

"Kyaaa!"

Poor Kino ran herself into the demon's arm and was knocked away. Hermes, having lost his rider, kept going until he crashed into a wooden fence. A mirror and the blinker shattered.

"This isn't good... Kino, why do you always have to act without thinking?"

The demon raised its elephantine leg in order to stomp on Kino.

"Ack!" Kino rolled away just in time to avoid being turned into a pancake. However--

"Huh? Whoa!"

The demon took hold of Kino's feet and held her upside-down in the air. Kino tossed aside the M87 and desperately grabbed at her skirt, trying to keep it up.

"Grrrrrwwoorrrr..."

The demon snarled as it stepped forward. In front of it was the fence. Beyond the fence was nothing--about 20 metres below the fence was the deserted track field.

"Huh? Wait a sec. Is this...?" Kino was now starting to worry.

"Looks like trouble." Hermes grumbled quietly.

The faculty office.

Loud gunshots rang out as Detective Wanwan fired the Bushmasters he was holding. He was aiming with his arm held straight, right towards Samoyed Mask α, who was standing on a desk about 5 metres away. He fired on automatic.

However, Samoyed Mask α deflected each and every shot. "I've said this before, but guns don't work on me as I can read the movements of your hands and your aim. Actually, guns are inefficient weapons. These tiny bullets can only travel in linear directions with a small diameter of effect. It only attacks in a two-dimensional line in this three-dimensional space. It's truly a cumbersome weapon."

Clang.



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Detective Wanwan was out of ammo.

"Ugh!" He angrily grit his teeth and tossed aside the Bushmasters. The guns fell to the shell casing-covered ground with a heavy thud. *Whoosh!*

"Hmph. So now you plan to waste more bullets?" Samoyed Mask α taunted. Detective Wanwan had drawn from his sleeve a Glock G26 semiautomatic. It was a gun small enough to hide under a coat, and could shoot 10 9mm rounds.

"Oh? Is that all you have left? What use is such a weapon when you couldn't even defeat me with a machine gun? Of course, I couldn't be felled even by the most powerful of guns. Hahaha! I shall dodge each and every bullet!" said Samoyed Mask α. Surprisingly, he sheathed his sword and jumped off the desktop. "Well now, Detective Wanwan. Now do you understand that you could never defeat me? You were quite the opponent, I must admit. Now, give up trying to avenge yourself upon an innocent man and let us go cheer on Mysterious Kino together." said Samoyed Mask α as he approached Detective Wanwan.

This was, of course, a ploy to get into slashing range of the enemy before he could be shot at.

"This time, I'll finish you..."

Detective Wanwan lowered his Glock G26 and purposefully waited for his enemy to approach him. He knew full well that Samoyed Mask α would draw as soon as he took aim.

"I only have one chance..." Detective Wanwan's lips barely moved. Samoyed Mask α walked along the rows of desks, one step at a time.

There were now 3 metres between them.

This heated battle would soon come to a conclusion.

Detective Wanwan was already within Samoyed Mask α's attack range. However, he didn't even twitch when Samoyed Mask α prepared to draw. And--

"Oh!"

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Detective Wanwan suddenly yelled. His gaze was fixed, not at Samoyed Mask α, but at the window on his right.

"Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino is falling with her panties showing!"

"What?!"

Samoyed Mask α turned to the window. He saw nothing but the clear summer sky.

"Where?! Where?! I didn't see! Did she really?!"

When Samoyed Mask α turned to face his opponent again, he was staring down the barrel of the Glock G26. There were three centimetres between the Glock G26 in Detective Wanwan's outstretched arm and Samoyed Mask α.

Detective Wanwan asked Samoyed Mask α, gun still aimed at his face, "Do you see this?"

"Well... yes. I see it very clearly. Even the bullet inside the barrel."

Samoyed Mask α replied.

And Detective Wanwan--

"Dodge this."

Pulled the trigger.

BAAANG!

The two gunshots that rang out near-simultaneously blended into one loud noise.

Samoyed Mask α fell to the ground in slow motion and landed on his back. The scattered test papers were tossed into the air.

Several of them fell on his face and slowly turned red.

"I've done it..." Detective Wanwan muttered. He wasn't smiling.

Detective Wanwan put the Glock G26 back in his sleeve and walked away. He left the faculty office, stepping on the shell casings he had sprayed.

Flapflapflap!

The sound of a dove's wingbeats.

After Detective Wanwan had left, a single dove flew into the dead-still faculty office.



GAKUEN KINO

Flapflapflap!

The dove circled the messy desks a couple of times, and descended upon the chest of the white-caped man lying on the floor.

Peck. Peck. Peck.

The dove pecked at the man's chest several times, then took hold of the test paper over his face with its beak. The test was marked 34%. When the dove moved its head slightly, the crimson-stained test paper fell to the right side of the man's head.

From under the paper was revealed a bloodied face. The sunglasses over the white mask had been shattered. There were a pair of red holes.

Snap.

An eye opened from the hole. The red eyelids spread apart to reveal black and white eyes.

The man slowly raised his head. There were very light wounds over his eyelids, each only about 3 millimetres in size. The cuts were bleeding very slightly. The tomato that was between the mask and his forehead had been brutalized.

"..."

The man's soft eyes looked up at the dove on his chest. The dove stared back with its round eyes.

"Hey... Carl."

I thought you asked us to name the dove! It already has a name! And it wasn't even 'John'!

The dove called Carl flew into the air. The man sat up, took out a white handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped his face.

"If it weren't for this mask, I wouldn't be alive..."

The man who muttered this while wiping his face was--! he was--! What a shock! He was Shizu! He was *the* Shizu-senpai!

Unbelievable! This is truly out of left field! All along, Samoyed Mask a had been Shizu-senpai!

What a twist! This was completely unexpected! No reader could have ever guessed!

Not even I, Amesawa, was told about any of this from Sigsawa!



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Oh, this is truly a shock!

To think Samoyed Mask α was Shizu-senpai! I'm looking forward to seeing how this will work out!

Now all that's left is the identity of Detective Wanwan. I honestly haven't the slightest clue.

"Aaaaahhhhhhh!" Kino's scream spun around the rooftop. Actually, it was Kino herself who was spinning. The demon had taken her by the feet and was spinning her around like a rag doll.

"Ugh... the blood's rushing to my head..."

Thanks to centrifugal forces, Kino was on the verge of a red-out.

"What am I supposed to do...?!" Kino complained. She considered getting out a gun from her pouch, but decided against it since the bullets might come flying into her face.

"Kyaaaaa! Someone help me! I'll buy you melon bread if you help!" Kino screamed. The rotations became faster and faster. If the demon were to throw her now, she might get close to approaching the stars.

Whoosh! The demon let go.

"Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!!!" Kino flew into the air.

"Kino!" Hermes shouted.

"Haaah!" A black shadow also flew into the air. It had come out from the stairwell, and leapt gracefully to catch Kino in midair before she fell from the edge of the rooftop.

"You're...!"

Kino was shocked to see the one who had saved her. He was wearing sunglasses, had white hair, and was dressed in black.

"Detective Wanwan!"

It was Detective Wanwan. He jumped over the demon and landed on the floor on the other end of the rooftop, and gently let Kino down.

"There."

"..."



GAKUEN KINO

"W-what is it?" Detective Wanwan asked, surprised that Kino was looking directly at him. He almost looked like he was embarrassed. "Thanks! You stopped Samoyed Mask a, *and* you rescued me! You're so reliable! Oh right! I'll buy you melon bread later! I promise!"

Looking at the energetic Kino, Detective Wanwan had a conflicted look on his face.

"There's no need to thank me. You should seal away that demon quickly." said Detective Wanwan. He looked back at the demon that was coming their way.

"Got it!" said Kino, as she drew Big Cannon from its holster.

"Dammit! Why are you the only one?!" the demon yelled at Kino in a human voice.

"The only one of what?!" Kino asked back, taking aim with Big Cannon.

"Why are you the only one that they like?!"

"Because she's the main character." said the still-collapsed Hermes, but no one could hear him.

"How should I know?!" Kino yelled.

"I can't forgive you!"

It appeared as if the demon that was approaching them was gradually shrinking. Actually, it *was* shrinking. It went from five metres to four, then down to three. It began to resemble a normal girl in a sailor uniform.

"She's regained her sense of self." Hermes muttered to himself.

Then he added, "w-wait! How did that girl know that Kino was Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino? This is weird..."

Of course, no one heard Hermes' voice.

"What do I even *need* to be forgiven for?! I'm turning you back to normal right now!"

"I won't let that happen! I hate you!"

The demon came closer. It now had the appearance of a normal high school student. She still had a terrifying look on her face, though. The bell on the cell phone at her side rattled.

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"Should I take care of her?" Detective Wanwan asked calmly.

"No, it's all right." Kino replied.

"You're showing me *sympathy*? Don't you even try! I'm going to kill you!" The girl replied to Kino.

"That doesn't matter! I'm still turning you back!"

Hearing Kino's resolute declaration, Detective Wanwan silently looked at Kino from beside her.

"..."

"Why? Why do you insist on fighting so desperately?" He wondered.

"Don't tell me you're one of those *friendship* freaks!" said the girl as she approached Kino. Kino had a sheepish look on her face.

"Well, kind of... but my *real* priority is..."

"Your *real* priority?"

"My real priority's curry udon. If you get killed, I can't eat guilt-free, right?"

How can anyone say something like that with a straight face? A strange silence came over the rooftop.

The girl came to a stop right in front of Big Cannon. Her face was no longer contorted with rage, but a bitter sort of smile graced her lips.

"Haha! I can't even hate you and your outrageous appetite."

"Ahahaha! Thanks."

BANG!

Kino pulled the trigger.

The students and teachers returned to the school once the crisis had finally passed.

With the frequency of these attacks, people got used to them.

Teachers and students alike began cleaning up, mumbling,

"Everything's a mess again".

A lone girl lay collapsed on the rooftop. Rather, she was lying on the roof, looking up at the sky.

"Hmph."



GAKUEN KINO

She looked sort of angry for a moment, but her frown had given way to a laugh.

She slowly got up and disappeared into the stairwell. The sound of the rattling bell followed her down.

Lunch period was almost over.

An old man was sitting at the cafeteria store.

A female student ran over to him. She had a model gun holstered on her right side. For reference, there is only one girl at this school who carries around a model gun. One person is more than enough.

"Mister!"

"Hello there Kino. You're running late today."

"I had some stuff to take care of. Anyway, do you have curry udon today? Do you have any left?" Kino asked, despite her suspicion that they would have been sold out. The old man's reply came, then, as a pleasant surprise.

"It's your lucky day today. Looks like we have one bowl left."

"Yeah!" Kino struck a victory pose. This wasn't too unusual.

However, the moment she took out her wallet--

"One curry udon, please."

"Curry udon, please!"

Of course, Kino neither asked for nor wanted two bowls.

"Huh?"

Kino turned around, surprised.

"You're..."

Behind her was Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou, a refreshing grin plastered across his face.

"I thought you might be at the cafeteria, Kino."

"..."

Kino ignored him and looked at the old man. However, the old man hesitated.

"Well... We've only got one left for today. Why don't you two decide for yourselves who gets it?"

"Me! I got here first!"

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"I disagree. I was slightly quicker to order."

"What?!" Kino turned around and berated Inuyama. "Whatever happened to Ladies First?!"

"There are some things in a man's life that he can never yield, even to a lady." Inuyama replied coolly to Kino's attack.

"Argh..." The moment Kino began pouting, however--

"Curry udon, please."

Another voice joined them. It was clear voice. A breeze, rest omitted. A dove, rest omitted.

"Huh? Shizu-senpai?" Kino called him by name.

"What?!" Inuyama turned around, hair swishing. Shizu stood before them with a calm expression on his face.

"How..." Inuyama found himself muttering, and ground his teeth.

"Hello Kino, Inuyama. I also had some business to care of, so I'm here for a late lunch. I'm quite surprised that they still have curry udon left. Sir, I would like to have the curry udon."

"But..." The old man was in a difficult situation. He then turned the decision over to the trio, refusing to take sides.

"I got here first! Therefore, I get it, end of story."

"I *ordered* first."

"I am a man who has dedicated his heart to the sword."

None of the three were showing any signs of backing out. Kino, who was particularly incensed because of her empty stomach, was being much more stubborn than usual.

"Oh..."

By this point, Hermes was dumbfounded.

"It seems this conflict is becoming unnecessarily antagonistic." said Shizu.

"I agree. However, I wish to try this curry udon that the one I like loves so much." said Inuyama. Kino sighed.

"I don't want to give up, either, but we shouldn't fight over something like this."

The men nodded. Kino made a suggestion.

"How about rock-paper-scissors?"



GAKUEN KINO

"I understand. No sore losers."

"Seems like a good idea."

Inuyama and Shizu held out their right hands. Kino spoke first.

"All right! Rock, paper..."

Instead of saying "scissors", however, Kino quickly turned to the old man, handed him a 500 yen coin, and ordered.

"Curry udon, please!"

Hermes muttered something about Kino not playing fair.

"..."

"..."

Inuyama, who had played rock, and Shizu, who had played paper, both had incredulous looks on their faces.

The old man was won over by Kino's actions and handed her the change and the meal ticket.

"...Hahaha..." Inuyama began laughing.

"... Ahaha..." Shizu laughed loudly, following Inuyama. Inuyama silently stared at him.

"Senpai. Let's postpone our fight... for now."

Shizu returned Inuyama's gaze.

"Yes. We'll put an end to this someday."

"Thanks for the meal!"

Kino clasped her hands, holding her chopsticks. In front of her was an aromatic bowl of curry udon. Chicken, green onions, and ginger were clearly visible through the steam.

"Thanks for the meal."

To Kino's right was Shizu, with a bowl of hashed beef with rice and a spoon.

"Thanks for the meal."

To Kino's left was Inuyama, with a bowl of miso ramen.

The student cafeteria was relatively deserted, but a few stragglers were still there.

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"Look at that girl. She's sitting between Shizu-senpai and the cute transfer student!"

"Who is she?"

"I'm so jealous..."

The students' sights were focused on Kino. Their murmurs spread through the cafeteria.

However, none of this bothered Kino one bit right now.

She energetically dug into her curry udon.

"Life is great."

Many suspicious things happened at once. The demon's knowledge of Kino, and the new transfer student Inuyama--these were the kind of things on Hermes' mind as Kino continued to eat her curry udon. However--

"Life is great."

Hermes knew that none of this would get through to Kino at this particular point in time.

Still--

Something terrible may happen soon.

The battles would only become harder.

Hermes was lost in thought.

To be continued!

...Probably.



GAKUEN KINO

Interlude: Colour Pages

Basketball Kino

It was a normal school day.

It was just before summer break, so Kino's gym class was just passing the time with things like basketball and volleyball since they had nothing else to do.

Kino, having changed into her gym uniform, ditched both her spirited red bandana and the annoying Hermes in the change room.

"It's nice to be able to forget about demons for a change and get some exercise." Kino muttered happily. She was soon dragged into the basketball court by one of her classmates.

From a slight distance, a pair of eyes were staring at her intently.

"Hmm... she looks quite good in her gym uniform, too."

The eyes were the only thing visible in the darkness. It was in this pitch-black space that these eyes were looking out towards Kino playing basketball.

"You... what are you doing here?" Someone asked the one who was peeping at Kino. It was a young, boyish voice.

"Aaaack! Don't scare me like that, Detective Wanwan. You shouldn't dress in black in dark places like this, as you blend into the surroundings too much. Make sure you always carry with you a reflector board, lest you get run over by a car."

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The one watching Kino was Samoyed Mask α. He didn't look any different from usual. No dove this time, though.

"Hmph. Are you trying to pick a fight here, Detective Wanwan?"

"No, I merely happened to spot you coming this way, and suspected that you might be up to no good... but what is this place? Why does a school gymnasium have an attic?"

"That is a good question. Allow me to introduce you to the 'Peeping Room'."

"'Peeping Room'?"

"This gymnasium was recently demolished in an unfortunate incident and was rebuilt."

"I know that."

"I just made a few scribbles here and there to the floor plans while they were rebuilding the gym. The builders never suspected a thing. As a side note, there are cleverly disguised peeping holes scattered around this room."

"I believe this would be considered a crime..."

"Pay it no mind. As long as no one finds out. Also, this room is completely soundproof. No one can hear what goes on in this room, no matter how much of a ruckus you may cause."

"..."

"I am here on lookout for demons that may threaten the safety and peace of this institution. This is, after all, a duty of a Warrior of Justice. You should consider it an honour to be able to see me in action, Detective Wanwan."

"... and what would you be looking at now?"

"Thighs. And bloomers."

"..."

"Did you know, Detective Wanwan?"

"Know what?"

"Bloomers were originally popularized by Amelia Bloomer, a women's rights activist. In those days, bloomers were baggy, with narrow ankles. Eventually they evolved to a much shorter style that could be worn under skirts, and became what they are today."



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Unfortunately, bloomers have been rendered nearly extinct in Japan because they were unpopular with women. It is a true shame."

"... I have nothing to say to you. If you'll excuse me."

"I see. Oh! The student called Kino has just fallen on her rear and rolled on the ground!"

"!"

"I daresay, you moved extraordinarily quickly just now, Detective Wanwan. Perhaps you would be able to fight me evenly if you were to use this level of speed during our battles."

"... if you'll excuse me!"

"I see. Oh! That student called Kino is now fixing a wedgie!"

"!!"

"I daresay, you were very quick to peep through those holes just now, Detective Wanwan. Not even I may be able to match that speed in battle."

"... If you'll *please* excuse me!"

"I see. Ohhh! Is that even legal, young maiden?"

Suchablatantlysexypose--!"

"!!!"

"Made you look! Gotcha! I gotcha! What a perv~ look, everyone! Detective Wanwan is a pervert! He moves so quickly when he goes to look at dirty stuff~!"

"..."

"Hm? Have I angered you? It's merely a joke. A foreign¹³ joke. Wait, those guns are--ack! Wait!"

"I'll kill you!"

Bang! Thud! Ratatatatat!

As the two idiots began a serious battle in the secret, completely soundproof room--

¹³ The Korean text originally said, "American joke". It's likely just a reference to foreign jokes that are lost on non-native speakers.

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"Yeah! I got it!"

Kino scored a 3-pointer.

Swimming Kino

"Kino?"

"What is is, Hermes?"

"Why isn't anyone here? Aren't pools supposed to be lively places?"

"It's 'cause it's summer break now. No one'd want to come to school on the first day of summer break--not even for the pool's opening day."

"I get it. But what about the dorm kids?"

"They all went home last night or this morning. The dorm's practically a ghost town."

"What about you, Kino?"

"Thing is, I've been so busy lately with the demons, Samoyed Mask, and Samoyed Mask α that I completely forgot to reserve bus and ferry tickets. I rushed at the last minute and made phone calls everywhere, but I couldn't get anything. I have to leave the day after tomorrow."

"That's why you have so much free time?"

"Things would have been a lot easier if you'd transform into a large motorcycle, Hermes. Then I could just zoom along the highway--"

"I can't do that unless it's for fighting a demon. Besides, you don't have a license, or even a helmet, Kino."

"True. ...I'm bored."

"Why don't you go swim around? You're in a pool, after all."

"Later. I don't wanna do anything right now. Oh yeah! Hermes, I lost track of you while I was changing. Where are you right now?"

"A dark place. No one'll find me as long as I'm here. You won't even look suspicious, even when you're talking to yourself. I jumped over here while you were changing just now. Thankfully, I can hide here because you're a girl.."

"..."

"What's wrong?"



GAKUEN KINO

"Kyaa! Hermes, you pervert!"

"Huh? Where am I supposed to go, then?"

"Pervert! What's wrong with you?"

"Wait a sec, Kino. What's wrong?"

"You're disgusting! Insensitive!"

"Huh? Is it bad if I hide here?"

"O-of course it is!"

"But your hair's so thick, it's easy to hide here."

"... wait. What'd you just say?"

"Your hair."

"Hermes? Where are you right now?"

"On your head. Near where you part your hair."

"... oh."

"Where did you think I was, Kino?"

"..."

"Kino?"

"... look at those clouds, Hermes! Summer's finally here."

"Yeah. It's summertime."

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Chapter 3: Last Man Standing Got Milk (Part 1)

Narration: Kino

"Are you ready, everyone? Gakuen Kino is about to begin! Before you start reading, make sure you're in a brightly lit place and your heart is steeled for what's about to come!

Do you guys have a 'hometown'? A place where your kindly grandparents welcome you with open arms, and you go back to enjoy your breaks, and you want to stay forever even if you can't?

This story started when I went back to my hometown for summer break. But these two weird people tagged along for some reason. I was so angry with them, but Grandma welcomed them both. Can you believe it? She said that she was going to have one of them marry me, and there was even a monster attack! What's going to happen to my summer break? Still, I'm my Grandma's granddaughter! When I'm in trouble, all I need to do is fire! (echo)

<The School Arc--Previously on>

Kino, Hermes, and Shizu had been chasing down the Galactic Overlord through outer space, when the Goddess of a backwater planet they visited to restock asked them for help. The Galactic Overlord's minions had hatched an evil plot to taint the young people of this planet with evil! Da-dun! (sfx)

Kino and company refused instantly, but the outraged Goddess forcibly took hold over them and injected them with false



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memories. Now Kino, Hermes, and the extremely handsome and popular Shizu-senpai (6th year) find themselves going to school.

The main character Kino, an ordinary schoolgirl, transforms into the Warrior of Justice, "Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino"(abbrev. Kino) to fight humans tainted by evil and turned into demons and turn them back to normal.

A mysterious masked pervert calling himself "Samoyed Mask" and his successor, "Samoyed Mask α" also make an appearance, and was most shockingly revealed in the previous story to have been Shizu-senpai. It was a truly unexpected surprise.

And is he an enemy or an ally? A white dog-turned prettyboy--the transfer student who showed up just before summer break, Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou. Also appearing is Detective Wanwan, a warrior who bears a striking resemblance to Inuyama. He is a formidable fighter who uses a dual-gun wielding style called the "Septuple-Gun Fist Style", which raises his attack power by 120%. Don't forget him, either.

This is a rough summary of all the events that have so far transpired.

This story takes place immediately after Chapter Two, as Kino returns to her hometown in Hokkaido for summer break. If this were an anime series, it would be episode seven, where it is just starting to lose viewership (since the previous chapter was quite long, it would be considered a two-episode arc). It's also about time for the opening song to be released in karaoke places. Raise your voices, everyone! Since it's summer, the ending song will start with Kino's rallying cries. A CD with a guide to the dance (**Editorial Dept.:** Get on with it!)

VOLUME 01



Gakuen Kino Chapter 3: *Last Man Standing Got Milk ~ Summer Break Smells Like Romance and Gunsmoke - The Blade and the Dog's Battle to be the Groom? ~*

Dear Grandma,

It's been really hot these past few days. How are you doing? I'm doing fine, myself.

First term is finally over. I wanted to come back as soon as summer break started, but I was so busy that I completely forgot to book tickets. I finally managed to get tickets for the night train and the ferry just now. I think I'll be able to get home by the ___th.

I can't wait to taste your cooking.

Love, Kino.

Dear Kino,

Raise alarm when enemy is discovered. Federation fleet will mobilize and sink enemy ship.

Ceiling unlimited. High waves.

From your healthy Grandma.

"It's just like Grandma to write a letter like this!"



GAKUEN KINO

"Kino, I don't understand what she's talking about."

"Really? Which part, Hermes?"

"All of it."

"Make sure you haven't forgotten anything, Kino." a dormitory caretaker lady reminded Kino as she walked through the doors to the dorms.

It was a midsummer evening, just after the end of the rainy season, so it was still very hot even after sunset.

The caretaker was talking to a teenaged girl. The girl's short black hair framed her pretty face. She was wearing thin jeans and a light green T-shirt. On the shirt was a small picture of a campfire, and the words "Don't toss around an open-bolt gun!". On the black baseball cap on her head were the words, "Si vis pacem, para bellum"¹⁴.

Around her waist was a belt from which hung multiple pouches. In the holster on her right thigh was a revolver-type model gun.

At the girl's feet was a rather large leather suitcase. On closer examination, it seemed to be one of those convenient bags with wheels that could be rolled around with ease.

¹⁴ Latin phrase by Vegetius, meaning "If you wish for peace, prepare for war"

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"Of course! Thanks for everything this term." the girl called Kino bowed to the lady in the apron. That's right. Today was the third day of summer break. Kino was the last of the dormitory students to clear out of the building. Once Kino had left, the caretaker ladies would be able to enjoy a brief holiday until the sports clubs' training camps started.

"The caretaker ladies would have been on vacation for two days now if you'd gotten your tickets earlier, Kino." a tiny voice lectured Kino, and the caretaker lady cocked her head in surprise. Kino reached into her pocket and crushed its contents in her iron grip.

"But Kino--grk!"

"Have a great summer, ma'am!" Kino smiled, waved, and left the dormitory. She dragged her suitcase behind her, beginning her long journey to her hometown in Hokkaido.

"Why did you have to talk out loud, Hermes?!"

The train station was a good ways away, but Kino was fit enough to make the trip on foot. She was currently walking through a wide street in the nearby suburbs. Kino spoke quietly so she wouldn't be heard by passerbys.

"You made me look like a weirdo again!"

"You've always been a weirdo--grk!"

Kino mercilessly grasped the cell phone strap she took out of her pocket . It was a strap made of green leather and yellow metal,



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with a simple design. There was a key attached to it, but it wasn't for her room.

"If you talk during this trip while someone else is around, I'm gonna throw you aside and never look back!"

"Okay, I got it. I'll keep it down."

The boyish voice that had been talking all this time was Hermes, the talking cell phone strap.

"It's going to be a long trip, so watch it! You can't let anyone hear you."

"All right, all right. I'll go to sleep now, so wake me up when you get home."

Unbeknownst to Kino (and Hermes), someone was spying on her from behind a lamppost.

"..."

He had slightly long black hair and wore a white standing-collar uniform. He had a katana strapped to his side. A dove was perched on his head.

"..."

Unbeknownst to the young man, someone was spying on him from behind the bushes. A large white dog with a smiling face, whose eyes held a suspicious glint. A Chihuahua on a walk scared its master by barking suddenly at this large dog.

"All right! I finally get to go home! I can't wait!"

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Kino, ignorant of her small entourage, stretched her arms into the air peacefully and blissfully.

Kino's journey was to be a long one, with multiple modes of transport involved.

Kino's school was in Yokohama, in Kanagawa Prefecture. She arrived at the station just as the sun finally set.

Kino had a long time to wait before the train would arrive. She would have stayed at the dorms until later if not for the caretaker urging her to get to the station before dark. Kino went to a small theatre at the mall across from the station to watch a movie called "Air Force Dogfights from Around the World".

Kino finally began her journey proper at 8 in the evening. She first took the JR Keihin northeast line to the nearby Oofuna Station. Once she arrived, Kino ate noodles at a standing-counter restaurant alongside drunken salarymen. To be specific, her noodles were topped with fried burdock, raw egg, and seaweed. Kino made it a point to eat hot food during the summer. Her meal came out to a total of 520 yen.

From Oofuna, Kino took the JR Shonan Shinjuku line to Shinjuku Station. It was past 9 now and the subways were completely empty.

She took the night express train "Moon Light Echigo" at 11:09 P.M. from Shinjuku. It was a long-distance train that Kino could ride with the Seishun 18 ticket. As a side note, She was on the women-



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only car of the train. She wore a long-sleeve shirt because of the overly cold air conditioning.

Kino put her suitcase on the floor, rested her feet on it, leaned back her seat, covered her face with her cap, and--

"Good night."

She fell asleep even before the ticket check. The train passed through the dark, deserted station.

"..."

A suspicious set of eyes looked at the train from the roof of the platform, head upside-down. There was a katana at his side and a dove rested on his chin.

"..."

A creepy set of eyes looked at the suspicious man from within a clear, terrorism-prevention trash can¹⁵. It had white fur.

Someone call the police already!

It was early next morning--5 A.M. to be precise--when the train arrived at Niigata Station. The summer sun was just peeking over the eastern horizon. It was going to be another hot day.

¹⁵ These trash cans are like normal trash cans, but have been stripped of everything that is not essential framing. The garbage bag tends to be clear as well.

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Kino glanced at the other passengers as they hurried to transfer to a northbound train.

"Hwaaaahh... I'm still sleepy."

She yawned and wheeled her suitcase out of the deserted Niigata Station. Up next for Kino was the ferry. Kino was fit enough to walk all the way to the harbour. The Shinano River flowed as peacefully as usual. Less than an hour later, Kino arrived at the ferry terminal about four kilometres away.

The large Shin-Nippon Ferry "Yukari" (length 200 metres, weight 18000 tonnes) had just entered the port with passengers from Otaru.

Kino had a breakfast of rice balls from a nearby convenience store and boarded the ferry.

She was staying in a small S Bedroom which contained a single bed and was surrounded by curtains. It was a decent accommodation that gave her privacy and enough space to get changed. The only bad points would be that it got very hot when the curtains were shut and that the lamp at her bedside was a little too dim.

The ferry also carried cars. They lined up as they systematically loaded themselves into the ferry's gaping maw. One particular vehicle, a large four-wheel drive with a boat loaded on top, drove up the ramp. No one, not even its driver, other passengers, or even the ferry workers noticed the calm man with a katana clinging to the underside of the car.

"..."

There was a dog glaring at him from a distance. It was a white dog.



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The ship sounded the foghorn and departed at 10:30 A.M. sharp. Some people were enjoying the view from the deck, but Kino was in bed, off in dreamland. Looks like she didn't get enough sleep on the train. The ferry left the mouth of the Shinano River and made its way into the sea, headed north.

"..."

A white dog standing upright on its hind legs watched the ship, now a tiny speck on the horizon. He was on the beach of the Yamanoshita Navy Park, near Niigata Airport. A huge airplane flew overhead. In front of the dog was, of course, the ocean.

"Hm... Haah!"

The dog leapt into the water with a short cry. He soon began feverishly dog-paddling. The dog headed straight for the ferry like a homing mine, leaving white foam in his wake.

The ferry sailed across the peaceful summer seas and pushed north.

Kino slept, ate, slept, and ate a snack. When she had time left over, she would listlessly look up at the sky on the deck or take a bath to pass the time.

"That hits the spot! Just what I need after a nice bath! I'm getting another cup!" Kino downed her *Kirin Guarana* (A carbonated drink exclusive to Hokkaido. Sigsawa claims it's really good, but keep in mind this guy's favourite drink is the infamous Root Beer).

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The setting sun lit up the seas a bright orange. The ferry passed by another ship, leaving from Otaru. The announcement bell rang, and the ferry attendant lady's voice came over the speakers.

"Attention passengers. Our sister ship, 'Lilac', will shortly be passing to our left. Condition Red! All hands prepare for battle!" What, are they planning to sink it?

Kino slept early that night. She was quite good at falling asleep despite having taken long naps earlier in the day.

The next day, which was the morning of the third day of Kino's journey, Kino had no choice but to wake up early. It was actually before dawn.

The ship was set to arrive at Otaru at 4:10 A.M., so an announcement came over the speakers to wake up the passengers in time to sing--I mean, disembark. How merciless of them.

"This is the captain speaking. Do not call me 'Admiral'! This is a civilian ship! All hands rise and prepare for battle! How long you plan on sleeping, you maggots?! Get your asses off your beds! I don't need any lazy maggots on my ship! Anyone who slacks will be thrown overboard!"

"Ugh... I'm still sleepy."

Sleepy eyes and messy hair aside, Kino arrived at Otaru Port. It was a beautiful, clear morning, but it was quite chilly, as one might expect from Hokkaido. Kino might need a jacket.

"Welcome back, Kino."



GAKUEN KINO

"Grandma!"

An old woman greeted her by the port. Kino ran into her arms with a huge smile on her face.

The tall old woman was standing up straight. Her long white hair was tied and fastened with a hairnet. She wore elegant grey pants and a light purple jacket over a white shirt. At her waist was, of course, a holstered revolver. It was a real gun, but it was impossible to tie down this person with mere weapons laws.

She was Kino's grandmother. This frail woman had taken in and raised the orphaned Kino, instructing her in the way of firearms. After herself, Kino considered her grandmother to be the most important person in the world.

After brief, happy greetings, they discussed the goings-on in their daily lives.

"Well then, let's go."

Grandma led Kino to the parking lot. Kino followed, wheeling her suitcase behind her.

"Get in. You can put your suitcase in the trunk." said Grandma, as she stopped in front of one of the cars. It was a modestly-sized blue 4-door Sedan, a Subaru Impreza WRX STI. Yes, that is the car's name. It's very long. The car was very obviously brand-spanking new.

"Is this your car, Grandma?" Kino asked, pointing towards the car. Grandma nodded and opened the trunk (it almost looked like it had wings for flying). She lifted Kino's suitcase single-handedly and effortlessly put it into the trunk.

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"My little old yellow car started acting up last week, so I took it to the village car repairs shop. They said it was a miracle it was still going. I didn't want it to break down while I was coming to get you, so I asked the repairman to recommend me a new car."

"Oh. I really liked the old one. It was cute."

"Don't worry. I'll fix it up later and keep it around."

"I'm good with that."

They opened the doors and got in the driver's seat and the passenger seat respectively.

"Wow! The door opens forward like a regular car! There's so much room inside! Oh! It's even got A/C! I can play CDs here, too!"

Grandma, satisfied with Kino's excitement over the car, put on her sunglasses and started the engine.

"Since we're in town, why don't we go out to eat? We should do some grocery shopping while we're at it."

"Yeah! Let's go!"

The car left, leaving the ferry docks behind.

"..."

A pair of eyes stared at the blue car from the slightly-open back door of the parking lot trailer. A katana rest omitted.

"..."



GAKUEN KINO

A pair of eyes stared at the trailer from the roof of the docks, soaking wet. A white rest omitted.

After shopping in Sapporo and driving over hills and bridges, it was almost evening.

"Home sweet home! It hasn't changed one bit!"

The blue car leisurely drove through the quiet country roads at completely legal speeds, with an excited Kino in the passenger seat. Around them was a wide expanse of farmlands. Black and white cows mooed occasionally. Ahead of them was a forest. The car made a turn into a small gravel road that led into the forest.

Scattered at points along the gravel road were signs that read, "Private Property. Beware stray bullets." Kino's house was the only one up ahead. Grandma hit the gas. The blue car accelerated and hit terrifying speeds. Every time they made a turn, the tires skidded. The car jumped when they hit a bump in the road.

The car continued on without a scratch, however, leaving a trail of dust in its wake.

The scenery outside the window was passing at ridiculous speeds, but--

"So whenever the caretaker ladies see me, they always give me a huge helping without even asking--"

"Then I guess you need a custom double-sized rice bowl, right Kino?"

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"Maybe. Haha!"

"Of course. Ufufu."

Their conversation was so relaxed that it was almost scary.

Their house was in the middle of the woods.

On one side of the road was a farming field, a barn for livestock, and a shooting range. Beside them stood a large Japanese-style home. The roofs were tiled and there was a raised wooden platform--it was a dying breed of Japanese houses.

The blue car drove in at breakneck speed, braked with the skill of a Driving God and skidded to a stop parallel to the house.

"It's good to be home!" Kino shouted as she got out of the car. She opened the trunk and helped her grandmother unload the luggage. Because they had the foresight to tie them down, her suitcase and the groceries from Sapporo had retained their shapes despite the rough trip.

They brought everything inside.

"I'm home!"

"Welcome back, Kino."

Kino put everything down at the door, took off her shoes, and stepped inside. She took in the nostalgic smell of home on the floor.



GAKUEN KINO

The old black phone was still on the floor, and a sticky fly-catcher hung from one of the walls.

"Let's bring in all the luggage, Kino."

"Oh, right." Kino answered and turned around. Her grandmother suddenly spoke again.

"And I hope our guests will make themselves at home."

'Guests?' Kino wondered, and looked over at the front doors. She was greeted by an unbelievable sight.

"Thank you for your hospitality." "Thank you." they said, as they entered the house.

One of them was an upperclassman who wore a white standing-collar uniform, carried a katana at his side, and had slightly long black hair. In fact, he was an acquaintance of Kino. The most popular guy in school, "The Katana Nobleman", "The Swordfighter Man", the "Prettyboy Samurai"--he was Shizu-senpai. Accompanied by a dove.

The other person was a prettyboy with white shoulder-length hair. He wore black pants and a white shirt. He was a transfer student in Kino's class who had arrived from Belgium just before the end of first term. He was Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou, Kino's near-stalker who had been flirting with her non-stop, much to Kino's dismay.

"..."

Kino's jaw dropped.

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"I'm sure you must have had a tiring journey. I hope you didn't have any trouble finding the place?" Grandma asked kindly.

"I had no trouble following your tire tracks."

"I had no trouble following your scent."

The two gave these almost perverted answers with smiling faces. Grandma laughed and said, "Oh my."

"W-what are you two doing here?!" Kino yelled.

"Yaaaawn...?"

Hermes finally woke up from his nap.

It was a large room, about 30 metres squared. Smoke slowly rose from the mosquito coil in the pig pen.

In the centre of the room was a large table. It was fully laden with things like sashimi, salad, and steamed foods.

"Please, dig in. It's so nice to have young people over for dinner." said Grandma, wearing a tank missile-print apron, bringing over a huge dish of fried chicken. She then disappeared into the kitchen with an "Oh, the soup's boiling!".

"..."

Kino sat cross-legged at one end of the table and glared furiously at the two visitors. It looked like the chopsticks in her hand would snap any second now.



GAKUEN KINO

"What are you doing here?!" Each and every word was accented with rage. At the rate Kino was gritting her teeth, her chopsticks might not be the only things breaking tonight.

"Even if I reallllllly leniently excuse Shizu-senpai, I still can't excuse you, whitey!"

"My name is Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou." Inuyama bowed deeply, sitting cross-legged.

"I know that! I just didn't wanna hear or have to say that stupid name!"

Kino looked as if she was on the verge of throwing the bowl of spinach at him.

"What are they doing...?"

Hermes, who had been subject to watching the outraged Kino since he had woken up, was quietly watching from the belt that hung on a clothing rack. Kino looked ready to shred the visitors, stuff them into a box, and mail them off to Kanagawa Prefecture. However, she was stymied by her own grandmother's words--"Don't be rude to the guests, Kino. As they say, the more the merrier."

"Grrrr..."

The uninvited guests ignored the snarling Kino and started on their meal.

"Let's enjoy this dinner, senpai."

"Yes. Thank you for the meal."

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The two politely dug into their meals. Kino reluctantly joined them.

"Why do I have to share Grandma's awesome cooking like *this*?" she blurted out her honest feelings and sighed.

"This is soooooo good. I can't even find the right adjectives to describe it."

Kino's first taste of home in a long time was indeed excellent. She was ready to drag out the guests and shoot them in the head if she heard even a single complaint, but--

"I-I've never eaten such a delightful home-cooked meal! Everything is exquisite perfection, and it's excellently nutritionally balanced! Specifically, (rest omitted)."

"This is delicious! I feel like I'm experiencing true unadulterated joy! It's as if Heaven itself has been laid out in a meal on this table! Tres bien!"

Tch. Looks like Kino's lost her chance.

There was no use crying over spilled milk, but Kino would have been much less irritated had it been only Shizu-senpai. She didn't voice her thoughts, however.

Grandma soon returned to the table. It was a cheery dinner for everyone involved (with the exception of Kino). Grandma and the visitors had a great time discussing school life.

"You must be tired. Go get some rest."



GAKUEN KINO

Kino did as her grandmother instructed and went inside her room as soon as she had finished eating dinner. She didn't forget to lock the door tightly.

The men were given the guest room and yukata to wear. They thanked Grandma and ended up spending the night in this large room. Hey you. don't get any weird ideas. I said they're sleeping in the same room, but they obviously have their own futons and were keeping over two metres away from each other.

The moonlight shone through the screen windows. The men were looking up at the ceiling tiles and the hanging lamp.

Inuyama was the first to speak. He asked, "Are you still awake, senpai?", to which Shizu responded with a "Yeah".

"I never would have imagined that we'd be sleeping under the same roof like this."

"Yes. It was certainly unexpected."

"Say, Shizu-senpai. What do you consider to be your meaning in life?"

It was a sudden question, but Shizu answered calmly, eyes closed.

"To use the power I was given to defeat evil and save the oppressed... perhaps."

"That's quite the admirable purpose." Inuyama didn't sound at all sincere. He turned on his side and glared at Shizu. It was the kind of glare that could turn normal people to stone, but Shizu didn't even twitch.

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"Why don't you get some sleep? Mornings come early in the countryside. You should at least consider helping out with the chores in exchange for being allowed to stay over." Shizu tried to end the conversation, but Inuyama was not listening.

"You know what *my* dream is?" he started, without even being asked by Shizu. "My dream is to find the one I used to trust and serve, and beat him to a pulp."

"Hm." Shizu gave out a small laugh. It was quite unusual. Inuyama hid his surprise and asked, "Is it that strange?"

"What are you planning to do afterwards?"

"I've already thought about it."

"And?"

"I'll cross that bridge when I come to it."

"Hm. I pray for your success."

"Yes. But I know it won't come easy."

"Of course. Dreams wouldn't be dreams if they were so easy to accomplish. Good night."

"I see. Good night, senpai."

The conversation ended and the sound of gentle breathing filled the room.

"Fufufu..."



GAKUEN KINO

Grandma, wearing her PJs, quietly smiled in the hallway just outside the room.

The next morning.

It was a beautiful, clear day. (Question 1: Write this sentence in Japanese.)¹⁶

The sky was blindingly blue and the recently risen sun shone brilliantly. However, it was also quite windy. This is foreshadowing.

"Oh!"

When Inuyama opened his eyes, the futon beside his had already been neatly folded.

"Dammit! He got me!"

It looked like Shizu had gotten a head start this morning. Inuyama, scolding himself, got up and folded his futon in two seconds, changed out of the yukata and into his shirt and pants in three seconds, and brushed his long white hair for fifteen minutes.

By the time he made his way out into the front yard and the chattering of birds, everyone else was already hard at work. Shizu, wearing a T-shirt, was chopping firewood, and Grandma was drawing water from the well.

¹⁶ Original text was "Write in English".

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"Good morning! I'm sorry I overslept!" Inuyama bowed in apology and asked if there was anything he could do. Grandma responded.

"In that case, please help Kino move all the empty cartridges to the storage shed over there."

Inuyama nodded and went "over there", as Grandma instructed. "Over there" was a shooting range behind the house--a shooting range of about 800 metres, in the middle of the woods. Nearby was a large wooden crate full of cartridges of all sizes.

"Are these all from this morning?"

"Yeah. It's from my morning exercises. I'll get rusty if I don't practice." Kino answered, lightly hefting a German MG3 machine gun. She was currently wearing a green combat suit, and wearing her belt with Hermes hanging from it. Around her neck was a pair of acoustic earmuffs that looked rather like headphones. In each hand she held a rifle case and a pistol case.

"Get moving, luggage boy." Kino ordered, and Inuyama began moving the crate. It was quite heavy.

"You must have slept pretty well for an uninvited guest. I've been shooting away all morning." Kino complained from behind Inuyama.

"Damn you, Shizu... One of these days, I'll slaughter you." Inuyama muttered quietly. (Question 2: Explain why Inuyama feels this way in 20 words or less.)

The men were worked halfway to death with chores like cleaning, working the fields, and taking care of livestock, until breakfast began. Shizu calmly and perfectly finished his work, and Inuyama earned scoldings from Kino for having a little difficulty.



GAKUEN KINO

"Put your back into it! At least work for your food, you idiot!"

"Damn you, Shizu... One of these days, I'll slaughter you."

It was time for breakfast. Grandma finished preparations and called everyone in. The trio washed their faces with the cold well water and made their way inside. The winds got stronger and the skies became cloudier than before.

Just as they were about to enter the kitchen through the back door, a small truck drove in on the gravel road and made a stop in front of the house. The one who came out of the truck was a beautiful young woman about twenty years of age, wearing her hair in pigtails and wearing jeans, a T-shirt, and an apron.

"Sorry I'm late! Here's your milk delivery!" she apologized, and took out a plastic crate from the back. The crate contained eight large 1-litre bottles of milk. The woman stumbled because of the weight. Grandma, who had come out of the house, recalled that "come to think of it, the delivery *was* late today". Usually, the local dairy farmer would deliver the milk before the crack of dawn.

"I'm so sorry! I'm the farmer's niece. One of the cows is having difficulty giving birth, so he can't leave the farm. I'm running the deliveries in his place, but I got lost along the way..."

"You must be tired. Please don't worry about it. We haven't even had breakfast yet, after all."

The young woman apologized over and over again. She tried to carry the crate over, but she looked like she was about to stumble.

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Just as Kino stepped forward to help, the two men decided to act on their senses of chivalry.

"Please, allow me."

"Let me carry that for you."

As they held out their hands and offered their help simultaneously, they had no choice but to carry the crate together to the back door.

The woman gaped as she watched those two retreat to the back. She came to her senses very soon and shut her mouth quickly, but as soon as they returned from the back, her jaw had fallen again. Her gaze was locked onto Shizu and Inuyama. In Soviet Russian terms, it was like she was about to fire missiles at them. It was only natural, seeing as Shizu was really handsome and Inuyama was a prettyboy among prettyboys.

The young woman trembled with joy.

Her resentment at her uncle for suckering her to come to the Hokkaido boonies with a "there's good food here, and the air's as clean as could be. Why don't you come over? I'm not going to make you do any work" and making her run heavy deliveries the very next day completely dissipated. She'd never seen guys like this in Tokyo. It was pure excitement. "Love Blooming in the Plains of the North. The Tearjerking Love Story of a Tired City Girl and a Handsome Country Boy". There was already a TV drama in production in her head, with herself as the lead heroine. She would sing the theme song as part of her debut single. She didn't care which one she ended up with, but they would both have to fall head over heels for her. "No! Don't make me choose. Please don't fight over me. One of you can marry me and the other person can



GAKUEN KINO

be my lover." Her thoughts ran wilder and wilder. All of the above took 1.3 seconds.

"Here you go." Shizu handed the empty crate to the young woman.

"Oh!"

The young woman hid her embarrassment with all her might and placed the crate in the back of the truck.

'I don't need to rush. Haha! I'll come back to deliver again tomorrow. With a heavier crate this time. Whew!', she thought. She mentally gave herself a thumbs-up. It looks like she was already in love.

The words Grandma uttered immediately after plunged the young woman straight into the depths of hell.

"Since the milk's here, why don't we go inside for breakfast?"

The words are coming up right now.

"After that, I'll conduct a test to see which one of the two of you will be best suited to become my granddaughter's husband."

The winds became stronger.

"Why? Why? Why?"

The breakfast table was unusually lively. The noise awakened Hermes, who was greeted by the sight of Kino loudly complaining with a bowl of mushroom miso soup in hand, and Grandma's calm

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retorts. For some reason, the men were on the sidelines, silently eating pickled radishes. Hermes, concluding that something big had happened, raised his hearing sensitivity. He could hear Kino's voice clearly.

"Why do I have to marry one of those two?!"

"You know what they say. 'Life is short. Let the young women love'." Grandma answered with a perfectly straight face.

"What? What? What's going on-grk!" Hermes asked loudly, without even thinking. Kino crushed him in her grip. At the rate Kino was going, Hermes would soon become a very dead phone strap.

Meanwhile, the young woman had somehow made her way to a deserted crossroads in the village. There was a lone vending machine at the road. She parked the truck beside it and drank canned coffee in the driver's seat.

"..."

Her mind was blank. She couldn't even tell the taste of the coffee in her hands.

The Weather Report came on over the truck's radio.

"Typhoon #7, which formed rapidly over the Hachinobe Sea this morning, is gaining strength and speed. It is projected to make a landing on Hokkaido by this afternoon. 'The weeping violin in fall breaks my heart'. I repeat, The gigantic Typhoon #7 is making its way towards Hokkaido right now at



GAKUEN KINO

choutTyphoonsareaseriousbusinesspayyourradiofeesnowifyoupaythe
Typhoonmightchange--"

Click. The young woman turned off the radio.

Sniff. Sniffle. She drank her tear-filled coffee and sobbed quietly. A melancholy twilit morning moment.

Brrrr. Brrrrr. Oh! It looks like she's receiving a text message.

"...?" She reflexively took out her cell phone to check the text. Its contents were as follows:

"Title: Do you want a prettyboy all for yourself?"

From: The Up-and-Coming Prettyboy Hunters

Message: You too, can have a prettyboy of your own! Pick and choose! You can't lose to that little jailbait, right? No subscription fees. Click Here and enter."

"..."

Click.

The temptation of evil had entered the information age.

Back home. It was just after breakfast.

Everyone was standing in a line, washing dishes and putting them back into the cabinets.

"With all due respect, I believe it may be much too early to speak of marriage."

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"What are you talking about, Shizu-kun? My granddaughter's practically a grown woman now. Why, when I was her age-"

"Hm? You got married at that age?"

"I was fighting in France's Foreign Legion."

Seriously?

Inuyama switched dishcloths and made the first move.

"I don't mind. Even if marriage is still far into the future, it is a good idea to make a good impression on Kino's family. If Shizu-senpai refuses, I ask that you at least allow me. I will do whatever it takes to repent for sleeping in this morning. And I will succeed with grace."

The bugle in the old woman's hand suddenly blared.

"3 points for Inuyama-kun."

"What does that mean, Grandmother?"

"It means the battle has already begun."

"Hm... I dislike meaningless battle. However, I am a firm believer in constantly training to reach greater heights." said Shizu, as he put detergent on the sponge.

"2 points for Shizu-kun. Inuyama-kun is in the lead with 3 points."

"Kgh!"



GAKUEN KINO

"If you give up now, Shizu-senpai, it means that I will emerge victorious by a tiny margin."

"I will not relent in any matter I take part in."

"Is that so? You didn't seem so enthusiastic just now..."

Sparks began flying. By now Shizu and Inuyama were the only ones still furiously washing the dishes. Kino and Grandma had both quietly snuck away from the sink, but that wasn't much of a problem as the men were working hard enough for all of them.

"I accept your challenge."

"Hm. You were slow to get so fired up, senpai. It seems that mentally, I already have the high ground."

"We'll see if you can still talk that way once the challenge is complete."

"I believe that only those who look forward will emerge victorious."

Huh. The winds became even stronger.

The backyard. Grandma began the proceedings.

"Everyone! Do you want to become my granddaughter's husband?"

"Yes!" "Yes!"

Shizu and Inuyama answered, pumping their fists into the air. Neither of them had brought a change of clothes, so they were

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wearing the same outfits as yesterday. They were also wearing unusual silk hats on their heads. Behind them was a star-studded red backdrop with cables running behind it,

In front each of them was a small table and a single buzzer.

"Then let's begin. The first round is a speed quiz. I will award five points to the first person to reach a score of 500. Each wrong answer will decrease your score by one." said Grandma, facing the two and holding a heavy pile of question cards.

The sky was getting darker. The grey clouds quickly blocked out the sun and the grass began dancing in the wind.

"What's this supposed to be?" "I have no clue." Kino answered Hermes' question honestly. She was currently wearing loose brown cargo pants and a grey shirt with long sleeves. Over the left breast were the letters "HK", and the text on the back read, "Oh my lovely roller locking". Around her waist was the gun belt with Hermes hanging from it.

"What is the world coming to?" Kino muttered, exasperated, sitting on a log a good distance away from the others.

"Here we go! Question one!" Grandma began. Shizu and Inuyama both put their hands over the buzzers.

"When Dengeki Bunko authors, including Sigsawa, go to a karaoke place in Ikebukuro-

BEEP!

When Shizu pressed down on the button at lightspeed, a large question mark popped out of the top of his hat.



GAKUEN KINO

"Yes, Shizu-kun?"

"The answer is 'Call the Chef!'."

"Correct. The question was, 'When Dengeki Bunko authors, including Sigsawa, go to a karaoke place in Ikebukuro, what do they say after eating something particularly delicious?'. The answer is 'Call the chef!'." said Grandma. Shizu sat up coolly. Inuyama who had been slightly late to push the button, seemed to be quite angry.

"Next question! In Okayu Masaki's work, 'Bokusatsu Tenshi Dokuro-chan', volume 1, page 39, what was-"

BEEP!

"Yes, Inuyama-kun?"

"The answer is 'male'."

"Correct. The question was 'In Okayu Masaki's work, "Bokusatsu Tenshi Dokuro-chan", volume 1, page 39, what gender did Dokuro claim the chick was?'. The answer is 'male'."

Shizu glanced at the proud Inuyama.

"Next question! The Dengeki Editorial Office is-"

BEEP!

"Yes, Shizu-kun."

"The answer is 'on the right-hand side'."

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"Correct. The question was, 'The Dengeki Editorial Office is in Chiyoda-ku. The closest JR stop is Ochanomizu Station, and the company is housed in a building called the Tokyo YWCA Hall. Which way, then is the washroom, as soon as you're out of the elevator?'. The answer is 'on the right-hand side'."

"Oh, I knew this one!"

"It seems you were slightly late, Inuyama-kun. But you two are both doing wonderfully. I can't wait to see how this challenge turns out."

The trio seemed to be having a lot of fun.

"Say, Hermes..."

"Yeah?"

"What's wrong with those people?"

"Who knows?"

Kino and Hermes, watching from afar, made a tired face.

"Next question! The guitar-" *BEEP!* "The answer is 'darts'."

"Correct! Next question. What is always-" *BEEP!* "'The fourteenth'."

"Correct! Next. Serialization-" *BEEP!* "'The Tokyo 1-Day Exploration Team'!" "Correct! Next question. The Shinano-" *BEEP!* "The answer is 'The Bank of Japan Incident'!" "Correct! Next question. A-" *BEEP!* "'The moon over Mt. Mikasa'!" "Correct!"

It looked like it was about to start pouring. Kino watched until the 108th question and gave up watching.



GAKUEN KINO

"Grandma, I'm going for a walk."

"All right. Don't forget your umbrella. Next question!"

Kino got up and started walking, Hermes in tow.

Kino walked through the narrow forest path, umbrella in hand, loudly chatting with Hermes thanks to the lack of bystanders.

"How long do you think do those two plan on staying here, Hermes?"

"Dunno. But what about that challenge? How long are they going to keep that up?"

"And I was just about to enjoy being back home too... Huh?"

Kino spotted something moving under a large tree ahead of her. If it was a bear, she would have fired warning shots to scare it away, but...

"A person."

Just as Hermes said, it was a person, crouched under the tree.

"No way!"

Kino ran towards the tree and was shocked to discover that the person was the same young woman who had come to deliver milk earlier that day.

"What's wrong?"

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The young woman remained crouching and spoke in a pained voice.

"I was just out on a walk, but my stomach cramps suddenly started acting up... my cell phone's not working, either..."

"Oh no! What am I supposed to do?" Kino muttered in a slight panic. The young woman took out a small bottle of energy drink from her pocket and handed it to Kino.

"Please open this for me."

Kino nodded and opened the cap.

"And please drink it for yourself."

Kino nodded again and downed the energy drink, hands on her hips.

"And please go to sleep now."

Kino nodded and stumbled. Then she shut her eyes. The young woman got to her feet with surprising force and caught Kino before she could fall to the ground.

"Oh! Kino!" Hermes shouted without thinking, but the young woman didn't seem to care.

"Hmph! Foolish girl. To think you would fall so easily for my trap, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino. Mwahahahaha! Haaaahahahahaha!" The young woman's laughter was terrifyingly high-pitched. Not only her dialogue, but even her voice had some qualities more befitting an old man.



GAKUEN KINO

"Kino's in trouble." Hermes muttered to himself.

It began raining in the forest.

It was daytime.

Powerful winds swept through the woods and rain poured down like a waterfall. However, in one particular backyard in the woods...

"Next question! Who-" *BEEP!* "The answer is, 'the clumsy editor lady!'" "Correct! The next question will be the 400th. Currently, Shizu-kun's score is at 200 and Inuyama-kun is at 199."

Two soaking-wet young men and an elderly lady in a white raincoat continued to go about a certain challenge.

Suddenly, the mailman arrived by motorcycle, trying his hardest not to be knocked over by the winds.

"Ma'am! I've brought your mail."

"Oh my. Just a moment. This way!" Grandma stopped reading questions and waved the mailman over. The middle-aged mailman walked over and handed grandma a plastic bag containing an envelope.

"Thank you very much. Take care."

The motorcycle disappeared into the woods, wobbling along the road.

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"What's this? The envelope's not signed." Grandma cocked her head.

"Watch out. Its contents may be dangerous." Shizu warned.

"Don't worry. The post office always checks my mail for explosives." said Grandma. She ripped the envelope open and took out the letter inside. She carefully unfolded it so it wouldn't be blow away, and took a few moments to read through its contents. A look of surprise appeared on her face.

"Oh my."

"What might be the matter?"

"What's wrong?"

The men asked. Grandma answered.

"It's from someone calling themselves 'The Enemy'. Apparently they have my granddaughter Kino held hostage. They've put her fingerprint on this letter--it's definitely Kino's."

"What?!"

"What?!"

Shizu and Inuyama were understandably shocked. Grandma, however, ripped the letter apart without a care.

"I don't know about this so-called 'Enemy', but I'm sure Kino can make it back on her own. She'll have to learn that it's a tough world out there. She'll be back by dinnertime. After all, she's armed."



GAKUEN KINO

"Pardon?" "What?"

The two men's jaws dropped.

"In any case, let's continue. Next question--hm?"

By the time Grandma glanced back up from her question card, the two had already disappeared. Two silk hats sitting on the tables were being unceremoniously rained upon. Oh! Looks like they've just been blown away by the wind.

"Ufufu..."

Grandma smiled and looked up at the stormclouds.

"I wonder... which one will be victorious?"

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Chapter 3: Last Man Standing Got Milk (Part 2)

"Beep beep! Beep beep! Beep beep!"

"Mm... Huh? Wha-?"

"Beep beep- Oh! Kino, you're finally awake!"

Kino, awakened by Hermes' loud beeping, found herself in a dark barn. There were no livestock, however. Deserted stalls lined the walls.

"Huh? Where am I?"

Kino had yet to figure out her current situation. She turned her sleepy face to the side and saw a rusted cart used to transport feed. Above her was a broken window which let the rain into the barn. Its frame shook violently in the winds. Kino sat alone against the wall.

"This is an abandoned barn in a nearby farm! Kino, you've been kidnapped by a demon!" said Hermes. Kino, however, considered it a trifling matter.

"I thought the demons were taking root in my school. Why would one be all the way over here?"

Just as Kino was about to get up, however--

"Huh? What's this?"



GAKUEN KINO

She realized that her hands and feet were bound with thick ropes. Hermes, her holster, and the belt with pouches were hanging high up in the barn. Hermes' voice traveled down from above.

"What'd I tell you? You believe me now, Kino?"

"Yeah- argh!"

Kino struggled, but the ropes were too thick. Her hands and feet were completely immobilized. Hermes explained what had happened just after she had taken the drink. The unconscious Kino had been transported here on a small pickup truck.

"You mean that milk delivery lady?"

"Yep. Judging from how she could lift you with one hand, I'd say she's fallen for the temptation of evil. I don't know what they tempted her with, but looks like you're the target again, Kino."

"What? Now they're even dragging in people who have nothing to do with me! This is unforgivable!"

Kino burned with heroic rage. You know Kino, *you're* the reason for all this happening.

"What are you going to do? The demon's gone off somewhere."

"Isn't it obvious? I'm going to escape like a hero, transform, and show that demon who's boss! Let's seal it away!"

"Good luck with that."

Hermes, who didn't do anything he could, was quite cold. Kino briefly fell into thought. She tried to bite her way through the ropes,

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but all she did was end up chewing on grass. She tried twisting her wrists and ankles, but it was no use. She put too much force in her leg and ended up pulling a muscle.

"This isn't going to work... Hermes, I have a Type-38 Rifle with a bayonet in my pouch. Can you get it for me?"

"Let's try to stay in the realm of possibility."

"You're useless! I don't remember raising you to be like this!"

Some things were difficult, no matter how much Kino tried. She did everything she could think of, until her face went red. The ropes didn't budge.

"pant... pant..."

Kino was breathing heavily.

"Are you okay, Kino?" Hermes asked with worry in his voice.

"This is nothing..."

Some things were impossible, no matter how much Kino tried. She was all alone in the barn, in the middle of a typhoon.

"Dammit... if I had my guns... if I could just transform..."

The moment Kino began cursing her own weakness--

"Dammit... I'm hungry."

Whoosh!



GAKUEN KINO

there was the sound of a blade cutting through the wind, and the thick barn doors fell to pieces. The grey skies peeked out from the doorway, along with a certain man holding a sword.

"Shi-Shizu-senpai!"

"Are you all right, Kino?" Shizu sheathed his katana, completely drenched. His wet hair was sexy, and his cool eyes were dandy.

"Shizu-senpai! You came to rescue me! Thank you!"

Kino was truly overwhelmed by thankfulness.

"You're welcome!" Inuyama replied, poking his head out from the side with a grin. He ran over to Kino, who frowned.

"I'm not thanking you." (Question 3: Translate this sentence into German.)

"I'm the one who figured out where you were, Kino." Inuyama untied Kino with a smile on his face. Kino asked him how he found her.

"I wonder... maybe it's the power of love?" he answered.

Kino turned away from him, appalled. Inuyama knew better than to tell her that he had followed her scent, and that he had attempted to snatch her underwear from the washing machine with that excuse and was almost stabbed to death by Shizu.

Kino, finally free, climbed up the cages, retrieved her belt, and put it around her waist.

"I thought you might be hungry."

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Shizu handed Kino a plastic bag. Inside were four rice balls and a small bottle of green tea. It was the lunch Shizu had brought from home.

Kino's eyes sparkled. She devoured the lunch in less than five seconds. Shizu spoke once she had finished eating.

"The kidnapper sent a ransom note to your house. Let's go back. I'm sure your grandmother must be worried."

Kino bowed her head, apologized for worrying them and thanked him for saving her. Inuyama asked, "What about me?"

"I'll forgive you for trespassing into our house."

That was kind of mean.

Inuyama shrugged, water dripping from his shoulders. Immediately afterwards--

"Oh!"

He let out a cry, as if he had noticed something. Shizu and Kino did as well. The trio put their backs to each other without speaking a word and put themselves on high alert. Shizu reached for his katana and spoke.

"Can you sense it? Something is coming this way."

"Yes. I can smell a large number of monsters. They are slowly surrounding this location."



GAKUEN KINO

"Argh... out of the fire and into the frying pan." said Shizu, Inuyama, and Kino respectively. Monsters were the strange creatures under the control of demons. They're annoying things that use their numbers to their advantage.

Kino was thankful to the two for saving her, but right now they were just hindrances because she needed to transform. But she couldn't just tell them to leave, after all they'd done.

Shizu made the first move. He glanced at the unarmed Inuyama and Kino.

"I'll take care of this. You two get to a safe location." he said heroically, drawing his sword. He ran outside before anyone could reply. Kino couldn't waste this perfect opportunity.

"All right. We should get away too!"

"I understand. A lovers' elopement?"

"Start running on the count of 3, okay?"

"Okay! The run of love! I'm ready!"

"One, two, three!"

"Go!"

Kino and Inuyama ran for the back door.

Never mind. Kino pretended to run for the back door, but stopped and tripped Inuyama.

"Oh my god--!"

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Inuyama, who immediately lost his footing, rolled all the way out of the barn.

When the sound of his rolling stopped, Kino heard the roaring of monsters and the sound of Inuyama being beaten to a pulp.

"Phew. I'm finally alone."

Kino smiled with the intensity of a thousand suns. She was a terrible hero--don't try this at home, kids.

"Good job, Kino. All right! Now you can transform and save them! You can tell the PTA that what you did just now was all planned so that you could save Inuyama at the end!"

"Got it!"

Kino drew the model gun from the holster. It was time to play the transformation sequence. Of course, the animation is recycled. This would use up a few seconds of screen time.

Kino raised her right arm high into the air, released the hammer with her thumb, and pulled the trigger.

"From my cold! Dead! Hands!"

The sound of the igniting primer was swallowed by the sound of the typhoon.

Kino's body was covered in a bright light. Her spinning form was shown from a low-angle shot. The fact that she was naked didn't matter because it was all in silhouette.



GAKUEN KINO

"Transformation complete! Fight as much as you eat, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino!"

Emerging from the blinding light was a girl in a sailor uniform. The Warrior of Justice, clad in a sailor suit and belt with pouches, had arrived.

"Hmph!"

Kino sneered and holstered her legendary Persuader, the Big Cannon~Shining Iron Demon Destroyer. It was a real revolver that could one-shot any demon.

"It's not time to use this yet."

That was because it was a weapon she could only use once per transformation.

Kino opened one of her pouches and took out a Sterling submachine gun. It had a cylindrical frame about 50 centimetres in length. The grip stuck out from the bottom and a long magazine stuck out of its left side. There was supposed to be a metal folding stock, but it had been removed.

Kino pulled the cocking handle and pulled away her hands. Because it was an open bolt gun, it would be ready to fire when the bolt had fully moved forward. Ammunition was visible through the opening that ejected shell casings.

"All right. First I'll save Inuyama..."

"Yeah. The katana man should be fine on his own for now."

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Kino and Hermes headed into the typhoon that Inuyama had disappeared into.

"But there's one good thing about this fight."

"Really? What is it, Kino?"

"Pervert Mask won't get in my way this time. There's no way he'd come all the way to Hokkaido to bother me, right? I can fight without any distractions this time." Kino said happily. Hermes, however, remained silent.

It was still early afternoon, but it was very dark outside the barn. The rain falling sideways drenched Kino's hair in an instant. A Warrior of Justice never uses an umbrella.

"Hey, whitey! You there?"

The back of the barn was overrun with weeds. Kino carefully aimed the Sterling and turned from the left to the right. There was no one around, however.

"You think he's been eaten already?"

"Something's strange, Kino. Look below you."

Below? Kino crouched down on the ground. There were strange marks on the ground. It wasn't clearly visible because of all the grass, but wet ashes were piled up on the ground--they were what remained of monsters. Something else was scattered across the ground--an innumerable number of gold-coloured shell casings.

"Hmm..."



GAKUEN KINO

Kino picked up one of the casings. It was from a 9mm handgun. It smelt faintly of gunpowder. Of course, Kino had yet to fire a single shot.

"Hmm..."

Kino tossed away the shell casing and looked up into the sky. Her frown wasn't just because of the pouring rain.

All Kino saw was a rainy sky.

"Hmph."

A smile appeared on a face covered by sunglasses.

A boy was looking down at Kino from atop a storage shed beside the barn. He wore black boots, black pants, a black trenchcoat, and black gloves. The mysterious white-haired boy dressed in black went completely unnoticed by Kino.

In his hands were a pair of 9mm Beretta M92Fs fitted with silencers. How many hundreds of rounds had he fired? The raindrops falling onto the barrel dissipated instantly.

"This should be enough."

A drenched Shizu muttered, as he cut down his 49th and 50th monsters at once.



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He was about 100 meters from the barn, at a location that was obscured from view by the typhoon and the rainstorm.

What could he have meant by what he had just said? Shizu was still surrounded by hundreds of monsters. The monsters were 2 meters tall and looked like bears. They walked on their hind legs and had thick arms and claws. Their gaping maws looked extremely powerful.

Despite being surrounded by monsters, Shizu sheathed his katana. Seeing this, the monsters approached him with fangs bared. This was a dangerous situation. If they were to attack at once, Shizu would be torn to shreds.

Shizu put his right hand over his face and tossed his hair elegantly.

Don't tell me-- are you planning to do *that*, Shizu?

"I am."

I knew it.

"I owe it to the readers to give them something to look at."

So you're planning a striptease? You're trying to generate fanservice? Of course, I take it you're transforming into Samoyed Mask.

"...a foolish author will only make his characters suffer."

What?!

"Pay it no mind. Here I go! My transformation! Transform!" Shizu shouted, spreading his arms.



GAKUEN KINO

"Haaaah!"

He then clapped his hands, still surrounded by the swarming monsters.

A shining light! Glowing as brightly as a pearl! Piercing through the darkness! The blinding, sacred radiance!

None of the above occurred.

"One, two..."

Shizu began taking off his uniform. He unbuttoned the top, removed his wet jacket and shirt, and even took off the wrinkled T-shirt underneath. His well-toned upper body was exposed to the world.

"One, two..."

He then proceeded to take off his shoes and socks. He removed the katana from his belt and took off his pants. Oh my! He's even taken off his underwear. His well-toned rest omitted.

"Hmph. A peek is all you get."

A peek? You're stark naked. This is indecent exposure.

"No, it is a transformation. I will accept no complaints."

I don't know much about law, but shouldn't this constitute as a crime?

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"Open your eyes. I am only committing the crime of 'Preparing to gather weaponry'."

Shut up.

The naked man standing in the rain began to dig into the ground with a shovel. Where'd he get the shovel, anyway? About two minutes into the digging, the tip of the shovel hit something solid in the ground. Shizu quickly cleared the dirt and took out a metal box the size of a suitcase.

Neatly arranged inside the box was a white school uniform, a white silken cape, a white mask, and a bright red apple.

"It helps to be prepared."

You mean you buried this stuff all over the country?

"Yes. One per every square kilometre, approximately."

Must be tiring, being you.

"Finally, the last stage of my transformation!"

You're just getting dressed.

"Hm... Could I do this alone? Ta-tata-tatatata! Tadada-tata!"

He began to quickly get dressed in order to turn from Shizu to Samoyed Mask. I understand you putting on the mask first, but you've already put on your shirts and jacket and buttoned up all the way, and you've even put on your cape, socks and shoes. So why are you not putting on your underwear?



GAKUEN KINO

"This is my transformation philosophy."

More like 'perversion philosophy'.

And then--

"Haa-hahahaha! Dear father in Hell! Your son is still alive and kicking! Aha! Haah! Yoohoo!" shouted Almost Samoyed Mask, as he finally covered his lower body. He then put on his belt, zipped up, attached his katana to his belt, put the apple on his head, made an indescribable pose, and shouted.

"Complete! That's right! I am now--'The Creator of Hopes and Dreams, Samoyed Mask R'!"

Thank you for destroying our hopes and dreams.

Ratatatat! Kino was firing rhythmically. Waves upon waves of monsters turned to dust and scattered into the storm.

Kino fired away with the Sterling, her back to the barn so as to avoid a surprise attack. Oh! Looks like she was out of ammo. Kino put the Sterling back into the pouch and took out another gun. It was an M60E machine gun, as seen on films like *Rambo 2* and *Commando*. She set down the ammunitions case on the ground, held the heavy gun at her waist, and...

"Let's rock and roll!"

She fired away with reckless abandon.

VOLUME 01



"It's no use! I'm not gonna let some weakling monsters rampage through my hometown!"

Kino fought valiantly in the middle of the typhoon. However, their numbers were too much. Kino found herself being overwhelmed. Thanks to cautiously putting her back against the wall earlier, Kino was now without a means of escape.

"Damn..."

Kino was quickly running out of ammo, but the number of monsters continued to increase.

"Kino! Let's retreat for now!" Hermes shouted.

"Over my dead body! They're not getting past me!" Hermes' voice, however, did not faze Kino. Oh! It seems Kino's machine gun was out of ammo.

"Damn!"

Sweat formed on Kino's brow. Of course, it wasn't visible because of the typhoon.

"This isn't good. You're in danger, Kino." Hermes worried, but at that moment--

"It seems you may need my help!"

A man's voice.

Click! The ammo-less machine gun went quiet with this last sound. The noisy barn area was enveloped in silence. It was kind of like a transition in a movie where the screen spun away from the camera.



GAKUEN KINO

"This voice... It can't be..."

The most terrifying thing to Kino was not her lack of ammunition, nor was it her current state of peril. It was this familiar voice.

"When the maiden of justice finds herself in danger..."

"Hermes, this must be a dream, right? I'm still asleep in bed back home, right?" Kino asked, face pale with panic.

"You have to face reality." Hermes replied.

"A lone knight descends from the distant skies!"

A breeze. The winds were already very strong because of the typhoon, but it seems this man's line just now had made it even worse.

"..."

Kino's jaw dropped. Her machine gun fell to the ground.

"Haaaahahaha! Here I come! Hyah!"

The scene that followed was the kind of thing that could make any member of PETM(People for the Ethical Treatment of Monsters)¹⁷ collapse, foaming at the mouth.

"Hahahaha! Hah! Die! Slash! KILL!"

¹⁷ PETM, is, of course, an entirely fictitious organization made up during the translation process.

VOLUME 01



The white-caped, white-masked, apple-wearing man who stepped between Kino and the monsters began mercilessly slaughtering the cute innocent monsters. In this case, the word "innocent" is spelt with the following kanji -> 純真¹⁸.

"The death of monsters is no concern of mine! Anything goes for justice! How delightful!"

The man in white madly cut down dozens of monsters.

"Hm? Was that it? Not even good for a warm-up." He rambled annoyingly, sheathed his improbably undamaged katana, and returned to Kino's side.

"Hello there, Mysterious Kino. I have rescued you from peril." He smiled. His teeth sparkled.

"Okaythanksforhelpingme. Now go away! I exorcise you! Move on!" Kino yelled, waving a broken branch.

"How callous, Mysterious Ki-"

"Don't call me 'Mysterious'! What are you doing here, anyway?!"

"That is an excellent question. The answer is..."

"Never mind, you don't need to tell me. I bet you'll just go off on one of your incomprehensible ramblings again and finish with 'Do you understand?'."

The katana man shook his head. He then spoke.

¹⁸ These kanji are homonyms to the actual word for "innocent", but are themselves meaningless.



GAKUEN KINO

"In reality, I am Shizu. I am currently staying at the home of an underclassman named Kino." he said, with a smile on his lips. In the middle of a typhoon.

"..."

Kino was silent for about three seconds. Before she knew it, the waterproof cassette player between the katana man's feet was playing a touching song. The song was 'Violin Concerto for Shizu-senpai~Everything I Do, I Do for Love', a song that was not included in the soundtrack due to certain reasons.

In the midst of the harmonious serenade of violins--

"Oh..."

Kino softly looked up at the man.

"Hm."

The man also smiled faintly and looked at Kino--Fire! Bullets rained down upon his face.

"That's not funny, you lying bastard!"

Ratatatatatatatatat! Kino pulled the trigger. She fired away on automatic with her AKM assault rifle on her shoulder. Straight towards the man's face.

Please wait a moment.

VOLUME 01



"Oh, what a mess."

A man stood in the typhoon, the rain automatically washing away the tomato stains from his face. (Question 4: Explain why a tomato materialized so suddenly. Multiple choice.

- A. Because Samoyed Mask can block bullets with tomatoes.
- B. Because of a sudden explosion of rage from tomato farmers.
- C. Because Princess Tomato lives in the Salad Kingdom.
- D. Because the tomato is on a Honda VTR1000F.)

"You make one more tasteless joke, and I'll pump your face full of lead!"

Steam of rage rose from Kino's face. So what was all that soft smiling earlier?

"I'm sorry." Said the katana man as he knelt on the ground. Pieces of the cassette player were scattered over the grass beside him.

"Anyway, stay out of my way! If you're going to stick around, try to make yourself useful, Samoyed Mask α!"

"No, I am not Samoyed Mask α. I am 'The Creator of Hopes and Dreams, Samoyed Mask R'. 'The Missionary of the Blade, Love, and Truth, Samoyed Mask α' from the previous episode has retired due to the injuries he sustained in the last battle. He is back home right now, helping to run the family sundries shop."

"I see. I don't care. You're all the same, whether you're R or α." Kino said coldly. She took out a new gun from her pouch-- a 7.62mm FN FAL light automatic rifle, inserted a 20-round magazine, loaded, and prepared to fire. Info about this gun -> It's thin and long.



GAKUEN KINO

"You must defeat the monsters and fight your way to the demon. Then you must seal it away with your Big Lead Gun. Do you understand?"

"Big Cannon!"

"Yes! That one!" Samoyed Mask R replied energetically. Kino frowned. It looked like she was going back and forth between trusting and not trusting him.

"Dammit! If only I had just one more teammate..." Then the third member would be able to get in Samoyed Mask R's way.

"Yes. Three would indeed be better than two, but there is no use trying to deny our current reality." Samoyed Mask R answered, completely ignorant of what Kino was actually thinking.

The typhoon got stronger. The duo was completely soaked. Of course, Kino was wearing her school swimsuit underneath her uniform as part of her transformation, so you couldn't see through her shirt. She was very thorough about things like this.

"There's nothing worth looking at, anyway." Samoyed Mask R muttered quietly.

Ratatatatatatat! Tomatoes went *splatsplatsplatsplat*.

A third voice joined the duo.

"Are you in need of help?" It was a cool, clear voice.

"Hm?"

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"Who's there?"

Neither Kino nor Samoyed Mask R could sense anyone's presence. As soon as they went into battle stances, however, a boy appeared from the mist. He was clothed in black, had long white hair, and wore sunglasses. His was a very familiar face.

"You're..." Samoyed Mask R began. "You're the perverted voyeur I ran into at the secret gymnasium attic, are you not?"

Ratatatatatat! Clangclangclang!

The boy the guns in his hands fired away with. Samoyed Mask R them all with his katana deflected. (Question 5: Rearrange the words in this sentence into the proper order.)

"Stop it, both of you!" Kino yelled, bringing the fight to an abrupt close.

"You. Detective Wanwan?"

The boy in black, Detective Wanwan, nodded.

"You're just in time! Thanks for coming!" Kino greeted him, holding both his hands in hers. Samoyed Mask mumbled in the background and kicked a pebble.

Kino spoke with a sincere smile on her face.

"I don't know how you got here, but I'm glad you did! I have to seal away the demon now, so wanna come help me?"

"Oh... yes. I'd love to."



GAKUEN KINO

Detective Wanwan looked extremely embarrassed to have been talked to by a girl, but he desperately continued talking.

"This is only our second meeting... but you seem so familiar to me."

What is this guy talking about?

"Oh."

Kino smiled anyway. This were certainly looking flowery.

"All right, then! Let us go, all three of us. Together, we are invincible!" Samoyed Mask R said energetically. "But before that, we should come up with a team name."

He then made his suggestion.

"How about 'Samoyed Mask R and his Merry Friends'?"

"Denied." "I refuse." Kino and Detective Wanwan replied at once.

"No? Then how about 'Mysterious Kino&Samoyed Mask R+Perverted Voyeur in Black'?"

Ratatatatatat! Clangclangclang!

"Stop this right now! You can fight later! Let's go, 'Kino Squad Special Forces', follow me!"

"That is a strange name, but no matter. Let us go, black-clad one!"

"Damn you, Shizu... One of these days, I'll slaughter you..."

"Did you say something just now, Detective Wanwan?"

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"No, never mind."

The typhoon was nearing its zenith. It was a somewhat cliched expression, but it would be completely accurate to say that it was raining by the bucketful. The skies were dark. Kino stood in front of a certain house.

"So this is where it is..."

It was a normal house with flat roofs that looked kind of like a series of boxes stuck together.

The flat roofs had recently gained popularity because of the lack of lightning strikes and the lack of a need to clear snow off the rooftops. This house had one of those roofs.

The house was situated beside a deserted, paved road. Behind it was a barn from which echoed the mooing of cows. Scattered in the field beside the barn were bales of hay. The small pickup truck on the property immediately gave away the fact tat this was the farm the delivery girl was working for. A sign that read '_____ Farm' rattled in the wind.

"There's no mistake. I can smell the demon in this area."

Team Kino had come all this way, trusting in Detective Wanwan's sense of smell. This farm was about a kilometre away from the abandoned barn.



GAKUEN KINO

"I've also picked up the scent of several normal people here. They're probably bound and held hostage inside. I can smell the cold sweat and the ropes."

Detective Wanwan's analytical skills were phenomenal.

"Hmph. We understand that this is the demon's nest. We also understand that there are hostages involved." Samoyed Mask R said, with a serious expression. Kino and Detective Wanwan fell into thought.

"So we should take care of them all by demolishing the house in one go." Samoyed Mask R smiled refreshingly.

"Shut up, you idiot! There are hostages in there!"

"Ouch."

Kino kicked Samoyed Mask R just as he was about to draw. She knew he would have no trouble going through with the terrifying suggestion he had just made.

"Ohhhh..."

Kino and Detective Wanwan ignored Samoyed Mask R, who was eating dirt, and began formulating a plan. They eventually decided that Detective Wanwan, with his superior firepower, would be deployed into the building first to draw away the monsters. Kino would then land the final blow at the very end. They could not think of a better plan. Of course, it was an unspoken agreement that they would both have to keep an eye on Samoyed Mask R so he wouldn't make a mess of things.

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"All right then, let's put this plan into action!" Samoyed Mask R said excitedly, as he drew with the energy of a child on the day before a field trip. And from behind him--

"I'm getting a bad feeling about this. Can't we just bury him neck-deep somewhere around here?"

"But wouldn't it be better to have more firepower on our side?"

"True, but... maybe we should put a leash on him."

"I will keep an eye on him. I'll take care of him as soon as he tries anything."

"All right... show no mercy, okay?"

"Understood. I'll wring his neck."

Kino and Detective Wanwan plotted together, making wringing gestures with their hands.

Some say that allies can be scarier than enemies, and there two are shining examples of such. Kino didn't notice, but when Detective Wanwan said the words 'take care of him', he had the look of a predator stalking his prey.

"Let's go!~"

The clueless Samoyed Mask R charged in first. The final battle had just begun.

Whoosh! Samoyed Mask R cleaved open the front door.



GAKUEN KINO

"Seriously... can't you open the door like a normal person?"

Kino followed after him, holding an MP52D6 submachine gun with built-in silencer. Behind her was Detective Wanwan, who was holding a Scorpion submachine gun with suppressors in each hand. Detective Wanwan was walking backwards, keeping an eye out for sneak attacks.

Inside the house was dark and silent. The trio searched the home, dripping water everywhere and forgetting to take off their shoes. The demon was surely lying in wait for them somewhere in this house.

"Be on guard. It could be anywhere." Samoyed Mask R said in an extremely loud voice. Kino scolded him quietly.

"Shh. Be quiet."

"Listen carefully! Let not the slightest sound escape you!"

"You're being too loud."

"Yes! Move with stealth! Detect the presence of the enemy!"

"I said, you're too loud. ...I'm going to get angry."

"Mysterious One, I'm flattered."

"It's not a compliment! Don't call me that, either!"

"Settle down, Mysterious Kino. The enemy will hear you."

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Pew! Kino shot Samoyed Mask R in the back of the head with the silenced gun. A tomato exploded, but Samoyed Mask R was unharmed.

"I've found the hostages."

Detective Wanwan had used his sense of smell to locate a group of people who were bound and blindfolded. It was the milkman, who was an acquaintance of Kino, his wife, and grade school-aged children.

"A-a demon suddenly appeared, and..." The milkman spoke. Kino calmed him down, led the family to the car, and told them to flee to the nearby school while she took care of the demon.

"But my niece from Tokyo's still..."

"Please don't worry. I promise you that we'll save her. So please get yourselves to safety first." Detective Wanwan lied, and the car quickly disappeared into the typhoon. He couldn't, of course, tell them that their niece *was* the demon.

"Hostages rescued! All right, let's go all out!"

"Doesn't matter, I guess... but try not to damage the house." said Kino. However, the least destructive fighting style among the trio was Samoyed Mask R's swordfighting. Kino and Detective Wanwan, after all, sent stray bullets flying everywhere.

"Let's get this over with quick." Kino was all fired up, concerned that her grandmother would start worrying over her. However, at that exact moment--

"Mwahahahaha!"



GAKUEN KINO

A deep laughter echoed from the living room. The trio traversed the hallway towards the source of the laugh.

"Get this over with quick'? You think you can defeat me so easily?"

So this is where the demon was. It sat on a large TV (one of the ones that have gotten much more affordable as of late) and glared at the trio. It was about human-height, but it was covered in dark grey fur like a stuffed animal. If it were to go to North America, it was likely to be called a Sasquatch or Bigfoot.

"So you've finally shown yourself, demon! I'll show you no mercy, even if you beg and cry!"

"Wahahahaha! I'll slice you to pieces!"

"It is time for judgement! Your sentence is execution, with no appeals granted!"

Kino, Samoyed Mask R, and Detective Wanwan said respectively. The demon sneered.

"Do your worst."

"I will!"

"Cut! KILL!"

"I'll turn you into a beehive!"

The muddy-shoed trio charged the demon in the living room.

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"Ohhhh..." "Ouch..." "How...?"

The muddy-shoed trio who had entered a stranger's living room had been defeated.

The room was a mess. There were multiple bullet holes and sword marks, with bent guns lying around the floor, and broken swords sticking out of the walls. It was difficult to believe that not too long ago, this was a cozy family room. The bullet hole-riddled door shook violently in the typhoon. It seemed that the winds had died down slightly, however.

"Hwahahahaha! Too weak. You're all so weak."

The demon sat unscathed, upon the hole-covered TV and sneered at Kino, Samoyed Mask R, and Detective Wanwan, who were all lying on the floor.

"Everyone's in trouble." said Hermes, from Kino's belt. He had been watching everything--the trio charged at the demon, the demon easily evaded everything and counterattacked, and our heroes ended up on the floor in the blink of an eye.

"You cannot defeat me. Go home and cry like babies. And you can stay there until I take over this world."

Perhaps it was thirsty. The demon said all this as it drank a bottle of milk.

"Grk... Hm... I see!" Samoyed Mask R muttered, seeing the demon's actions. He was still lying on the floor.



GAKUEN KINO

"What?" "What do you see?" asked Kino and detective Wanwan, who were also lying on the floor. Samoyed Mask R answered.

"I understand now... the reason for the strength behind this demon..."

"Really?" "What is it?"

"It is... milk! Not only does it contain bone-strengthening calcium, it also contains essential proteins well-balanced in amino acids. It also contains lactose and vitamin B2, which is known by some as a growth agent. In other words, milk is an excellent source of nutrition that is also easy to consume. It is a true miracle drink!"

Detective Wanwan agreed with a serious expression on his face.

"Yes... that is common knowledge to any fighter, but..."

"You-you mean we've lost to milk? That's... a pretty terrifying drink."

Kino ground her teeth, angry at her own powerlessness. Samoyed Mask R looked over at her and spoke.

"This is just a side note, but they say that some farms in the USA inject cows with bovine growth hormones in order to increase milk production. The hormones also affect children who drink, it, however, and results in unusually mature young girls. Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino! Perhaps you should travel to America and drink milk! In fact, you should leave immediately! For the sake of your future, you must drink!"

Kino was beating up Samoyed Mask R with a vase, but it was much too horrific to describe in narration.

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When Kino finally stopped, out of breath, the demon laughed at her.

"Hwahahahaha! How pathetic you losers are. All you weaklings can do is to fight each other until the end."

Kino couldn't reply. The demon was pretty much correct.

"Dammit... I'm supposed to be a warrior of justice... I'm the titular heroine... If only I were stronger..."

Tears welled up in Kino's eyes. The two men, seeing this, could do nothing but curse their own powerlessness.

"Hmph..." "Grk..."

"I wanna be stronger... I understand now... I was being conceited about my own power."

The tears began flowing. A single stream of salt water fell from her face and sparkled on its way to the ground.

"Don't give up! Your feelings right now will become your strength!" A dashing voice shouted. The moment Kino, Samoyed Mask R, and Detective Wanwan asked, "Huh?" "What?" "Hmm?" and the demon went, "Who's there?", a sudden explosion rang out. The house was blown apart. This sturdy house, built to withstand the weight of heavy snow, fell to pieces from the living room outward.

"Ack!" "Whoa!" "...!" the trio ducked.

"Aaaaahhh!" The demon was taken by surprise.



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By the time the dust had cleared, the trio and the demon were outdoors. The house had been blown apart, leaving nothing but its foundations. Light rain fell upon the living room carpet.

"Damn. Another one?!"

The demon leapt off the TV and looked to its left, right, and back.

"Ohohohohoho!"

There was a high-pitched laugh. It was an extremely elegant laugh that contained not a single drop of superficiality.

"Who's there?!" The demon looked to the direction of the laughter. The trio managed to wobble to their feet and follow suit.

"Looking for someone, demon?"

There was a lamppost. It had been standing beside the house. And atop that lamppost was--

"...!" "Huh?" "Whoa." "Oh!"

A person.

She was a slim woman wearing elegant clothing. She wore sharp black pants, a white shirt, and a black jacket. Her long grey hair went all the way down to her back. At her waist as a holstered revolver.

From her face it seemed she was quite elderly, but the twist in her lips betrayed a certain kind of strength. Over her eyes were a pair of expensive-looking sunglasses.



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The rain suddenly ceased. The skies cleared in an instant and the gale turned into a light breeze that made the woman's silver hair dance. That's right. This was the eye of the storm.

"Argh! Who are you?!" The demon yelled.

"Hmph." The woman smiled. She then spoke.

"I am..."

She is? She is? She is? The demon, Kino, and Detective Wanwan waited with bated breath.

"No... It can't be..." Samoyed Mask R muttered, mouth agape.

"I am..."

The woman waved her arms about and struck an awesome pose. She continued.

"The Beautiful Senior Gunman, Granny the Super!"

Tadada! Dadadada! BGM began playing the moment she announced her name. The community's waterproof announcement speakers blared out the timeless classic, hidden in the Official Soundtrack bonus track, called 'Granny Entrance Rock!'. It was a lively piece. The piece was accented with a female chorus singing things like 'Granny the Super!' and 'Wow!'.

The summer sun shone through the clouds, and a powerful ray of light acted as the woman's spotlight. *Rooooooooar!* Six fighter jets appeared in the air above them in perfect formation. It was 'Blue Impulse', the Air Self-Defense Force's Acrobatics Team. The jets



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scattered, leaving smoke in their trail. They began writing letters in the sky with their amazing piloting skills.

The words 'Granny the Super' appeared in the sky, and the last of the jets drew an underline beneath the words for added emphasis. The moment the jets disappeared into the skies, the music drew to a climactic close with the lyrics, 'Granny the Super! Ooh! Hah! Shoobie doobie doo!'

All of the above was the introduction sequence. It took up about three minutes.

"'Granny the Super'?! What the hell are you supposed to be?!" The demon yelled violently. Granny the Super, still standing on the lamppost, smiled and looked down at the nervous demon.

Kino and Detective Wanwan muttered, "Who in the world is she?" and looked at each other.

"Granny the Super... So she truly existed..." said Samoyed Mask R.

"You know her?" You know of her?" the others asked him at once.

Samoyed Mask R looked at the duo and nodded vigorously.

"Granny the Super..."

'The Strongest Senior', 'The Murdering Grandmother', and 'The Triple-Strength Hag' are some of the names she is known by. She is a mysterious old woman who is feared by every military and government institution in the world. A legendary warrior who comes and goes like the wind, rampaging through battlefields with no regard for allegiances. It is said that her strength is comparable to that of an entire division of US Marines, and many countries'



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militaries have a flee-on-sight order especially reserved for her. Rumours about this individual are numerous, ranging from her having been a Special Forces Captain to an Extraterrestrial Warrior, but the truth is still shrouded in mystery.

The number of Hollywood film adaptations she has received are testament to her mysterious allure.

1. *From Prussia with Love: Her Name is Granny the Super* (1962)
2. *Granny the Super II: You Only Live Thrice* (1972)
3. *Granny the Super III: On His Highness' Secret Service* (1978)
4. *Granny the Super IV: Rubies are Forever* (1987)
5. *Granny the Super V: The Woman with the Golden Gun* (1994)
6. *Granny the Super VI: For Your Ears Only* (2002)
7. *Farewell, Granny the Super - The Universe is Not Enough* (2005)

The eighth film, *New Granny the Super: Granny 8* is currently in production.¹⁹ The new series is regarded as the ultimate *Granny the Super* experience and is likely to receive rave reviews worldwide.

From 'Where has the Senior Gone After Leaving the Spotlight', from Minmei Publishing Company."

Samoyed Mask R Recited all of the above in one breath in order to answer Kino and Detective Wanwan's questions.

"So you mean *she's* the one?"

"A... legendary warrior...?"

¹⁹ The list of films in the Korean text seemed to be references to actual movies, but I couldn't figure out all of them and ended up improvising.



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"There's no mistaking it... to think one so lowly as I would be granted a chance to meet her in person... I'd better get her autograph later!" said Samoyed Mask, heart aflutter.

"Gaaaaah! Stay out of my way!" The demon yelled, as it pulled out its own fur. It tossed the fur into the air, and each strand grew into a monster. A monster army was formed in the blink of an eye. There were simply too many of them.

Granny the Super, however, did not even flinch. She elegantly flung herself from the lamppost with a battle cry.

"Haah!"

She did a triple cartwheel in midair, with the blue sky as her background. She landed beautifully on the road and aimed her M14 automatic rifle equipped with a dot sight at the same time.

Rooaaaar! The demon charged at the old woman. Oh, Granny the Super was in danger! However--

Bang! Bang! Bang!

With a heavy sound befitting a large-caliber rifle, demons began turning to dust. The bullets flawlessly pierced through the rushing monsters, starting with the closest ones. However, the magazine only held twenty rounds. She was just about to run out of ammo! Granny is in danger! However--

"Hmph."

With her left hand, Granny the Super took out another magazine from her pocket and tossed it lightly into the air. She twirled the

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M14 once in front of her. By the time the heavy gun returned to her grip like a cheerleading baton, the empty magazine was on the ground, replaced by the new one currently loaded into the gun.

"Amazing..."

Even Detective Wanwan was impressed by this display of skill.

"Ain't it marvellous?"

Samoyed Mask R began speaking with a different accent, impressed by rest omitted.

"That elegant but merciless fighting style... I've seen someone use it before... but who?"

Kino was intrigued.

Granny the Super, however, smiled at the trio as she fought.

"You three!"

"Oh!" "Hm!" "...!"

That's right. A protagonist shouldn't be just standing around in awe. Kino, Detective Wanwan, and Samoyed Mask R entered the battle.

Kino took out a Steyr AUG HBAR and prepared to fire. It was a Squad Automatic Weapon that was a heavy-barrelled automatic rifle with 40-round magazine attached to a rifle with the unusual design of having the magazine attached behind the grip. This particular model had a scope, just like a rifle. Kino called this gun 'Layla'.



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Whoosh! Detective Wanwan took out a pair of HK MP7 submachine guns. These were the slightly smaller models that fired SCHV(Small-caliber/High velocity) rounds.

Samoyed Mask R, of course, drew his sword. Even a broken blade was fixed when it was sheathed and redrawn!

"Hmph! Attack all together!" The demon ordered the monsters. The monsters cried out loudly and attacked the trio. A bloody fight had begun.

"Is that all you've got?!"

Ratatatat! Layla gave a vicious battle cry as Kino fired away, spilling shell casings everywhere. The monsters quickly began dematerializing. It wasn't quite at Granny the Super's level, but Kino quickly switched out magazines and just kept shooting.

"Haah!"

Whoosh! Swoosh! Flash! Samoyed Mask R nimbly cut down the lines of monsters heading his way. He struck the ones coming from behind him with the scabbard and sliced them in two afterwards.

"Maintain discipline!"²⁰

Bang! Ratatatat! Detective Wanwan leapt into a mob of monsters and showed off his specialty, the omnidirectional fist attack. Shell casings flooded the ground.

²⁰ This is one of Inuyama's catchphrases from here on. The original text was *heijoushin*, which I couldn't find a good English equivalent for.

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"Ohohoho!"

Granny the Super continued to fire with superhuman power.

Please wait a moment.

The winds picked up again, and the debris from Mr. _____'s ruined but still-28-year-mortgaged house began to rattle.

Ting! The shell casing from Kino's final shot rolled away at hit the collapsed mailbox. The shell casing continued to roll, and hit yet another shell casing. It was surrounded by a sea of sparkling golden casings.

"Damn... dammit!" The demon could not hide its shock. Every last monster had been--

"Defeated. All 260 of them... in less than a minute..."

"You're the last one." said a smiling Granny the Super as she put her M14 into her pocket. She then took out a Smith & Wesson M29 Revolver. It was a .44 magnum gun that rose to fame in the film *Dirty Harry*.

"Look out, Granny the Super!" Kino yelled.

"Yes, this is a powerful demon." Detective Wanwan added. The trio, a powerful force to be reckoned with, had been defeated by this enemy. Even the legendary Granny the Super might have trouble with this one.

"Die!"



GAKUEN KINO

The demon moved at lightspeed to charge at Granny the Super. His right claw headed straight for her face.

"No!" Kino yelled reflexively. However, the claw sliced apart nothing but thin air.

"What?!"

A voice came from behind the demon.

"Over here."

The demon turned around. It was staring down the barrel of the M29. *BANG!*

"AAAAAHHHH!" The demon, having been shot in the face, tried to lean back and land a spinning kick. *Whoosh!* This attack also failed.

"I'm right here."

Bang! Bang! Bang! The demon took three shots to the back this time. It was tossed back one meter and landed on the ground, sending shell casings flying.

"Unbelievable..."

Kino's shock was completely justified. After all, Granny the Super's movements just now were too quick to be seen with the naked eye. It was practically at warp-speed levels. If this were an anime, there would be no need to animate her movements.

"Such power..."

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"Yes. What strength!"

Not even Detective Wanwan and Samoyed Mask R could hide their astonishment. How could she have so easily overpowered a demon powered by milk?

"How is she so powerful?" "How...?" Kino and the demon thought simultaneously. Then--

"What?!" "Oh!" "Hmph!" "Wha-?"

The trio and the demon spotted something. Granny the Super was taking a moment during the battle to take a drink of something. In her left hand, the one that wasn't holding the gun, was a small bottle. It was filled with pink liquid.

"I got it!" said Samoyed Mask R. Granny the Super continued to drink, enjoying the taste. She finished it all.

"That liquid is... Strawberry milk!"

"Wha-what?!"

Everyone, with the exception of Samoyed Mask R and Granny the Super, was in shock. Samoyed Mask R continued to explain.

"I've spoken earlier about the miraculous properties of milk. Now I will add that strawberries contain 1.5 times the amount of vitamin C contained in lemons. That is the largest concentration out of any fruit. Vitamin C maintains supple skin, prevents freckles and wrinkles, improves the immune system, dissipates alcohol in the system, lowers blood cholesterol, lessens oxidative stress, and even prevents the formation of the carcinogenic compound known as nitrosamine."



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"Vitamin C... that's a pretty terrifying nutrient..." Kino muttered. Detective Wanwan spoke.

"I see! Not even the cure-all drink known as milk contains vitamin C..."

Samoyed Mask R nodded vigorously.

"That is correct. There is simply no way for a drinker of strawberry milk to lose to a demon that drinks only plain milk!"

"I get it!" "I understand now!" said Kino and Detective Wanwan, who had finally understood the truth. They smiled. (Question 6: Please write your honest opinion on everything you've read so far. Over 20 words, under 30.)

"Argh..." The demon stumbled and stepped back. It was in a state of disarray.

Granny the Super did not toss away the empty milk bottle just anywhere. She Placed it in a recycling box and returned. She then pointed the M29 at the demon and spoke.

"Move forward. Grasp your own future."

"Shut up!"

The demon attacked Granny the Super anyway. *Ratatat!* Granny the Super mercilessly pulled the trigger.

"Aaahh!"

The demon seemed to be in great pain.

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"Now, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino!"

Kino, who had been watching with her jaw on the ground, snapped back into reality.

"Oh, right. Yes!"

"Use your powers to seal away this demon!"

"Understood!"

"Finish it, Kino!" Hermes shouted. As a side note, the fact that Hermes didn't get many lines for a while is definitely not because the author forgot to involve him. Please believe me.

"Not a chance!"

The demon fiendishly ignored the pain and charged at Kino with all its might. It was pretty fast for an injured creature. It might have been even faster to attack than Kino was able to draw Big Cannon. However, at that very moment--

"Aren't you forgetting someone?"

Samoyed Mask R tripped the demon's right leg with his sword.

"Me too."

Ratatatatatat! Detective Wanwan fired at the demon's left leg.

"That was cheap!"

Boom! The demon fell to the ground.



GAKUEN KINO

"'Cheap'? Nothing's too cheap in battle! As long as you win, who cares? Last man standing *is* justice!"

Kino pointed Big Cannon straight at the demon.

BANG!

"She should be all right now."

Kino laid down the young lady, who had returned to human form, onto the sour milk-scented back of the pickup truck. The young lady was asleep, cellphone in hand and ignorant of the events that had just occurred.

Kino shut the door and returned to face the others. The sky was even darker than before and the winds were howling.

"Good work, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino." Granny the Super said softly.

"..." Looking at her face, Kino was sure that the elderly woman looked very familiar. Granny the Super wondered why Kino was staring at her.

"Huh? N-no. It's nothing." Kino answered awkwardly. She then asked, "Granny the Super? Who are you, really?"

"That's a secret. But I'll tell you that I'm just like you and your friends--I fight because of my love for justice."

Granny the Super lightly put her hands on Kino's shoulders.

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"You can become even stronger. And then you'll be able to defend this world, and the peaceful lives of others. Can you do it?"

"Yes!"

"I expected no less from you. I'll leave the rest to you young people now. Seniors can't hog the spotlight for too long, you know." with these words, Granny the Super disappeared from sight. She was gone in a flash.

Kino, hair blowing in the wind, mumbled to herself.

"Granny the Super... One day, when I get stronger, I'll see you again. I'm sure we'll meet again..."

"That's right. Our battle has only just begun." said Detective Wanwan, as he stepped to Kino's side with a smile.

"That is correct. I suggest we start by getting rid of picky eating habits and drinking milk every day."

Samoyed Mask R followed suit.

The trio stood together, looking up at the sky. It was an endless blue filled with white clouds. They then shouted in unison--

"Milk is definitely the best!"

The eye of the storm was about to depart. Soon the trio would be besieged by torrential rain and gale-force winds.

However, their justice-loving hearts would remain cloudless and clear...



GAKUEN KINO

Forever.

"Ack! I'm soaked! It's so cold!" Kino yelled, as she ran along the forest path.

There were still 100 meters of typhoon to run through until she arrived at her house. Kino had said goodbye to Detective Wanwan and Samoyed Mask R back at the farm, changed back, and was running back home.

Oh! Someone appeared from somewhere in the downpour. Upon closer inspection, it was Shizu-senpai, dressed in his white uniform and completely drenched.

"Senpai!"

"Kino. I'm glad you're all right."

"Yeah. Sorry if I worried you."

Running through the rain, the duo encountered a third person along the way.

"Oh, senpai! Kino! You're both okay!"

It was Inuyama. Shizu stoically said, "I'm glad you're safe", and Kino coldly added, "yeah. Glad you're okay."

"We're home! Grandma, could you get us some towels?"

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They finally managed to catch their breath after entering the house. Grandma came to the doors, having heard Kino's voice, and welcomed them with three fluffy towels in hand.

Kino thanked her and handed one of the towels to Shizu. She was just about to hand another to Inuyama, but--

"Huh? What's going on?"

Inuyama was not at all wet. His pants and shirt were completely dry, as was his swishy hair.

"Inuyama? How'd you...?"

Inuyama answered promptly.

"Conviction."

Inuyama was quite the fashionista.

Evening.

After the typhoon had passed, the clouds had cleared. Stars shone brilliantly in the summer sky.

And underneath that sky--

"Please, dig in, everyone."

Grandma, Kino, Shizu, and Inuyama were sitting around a large grill. The coal was glowing red, and meats and vegetables cooked



GAKUEN KINO

crisply over the fire. It was a backyard barbecue party, complete with lanterns to light the evening. Of course, the meat was lamb. It was a dish called Genghis Khan that you could buy even at convenience stores in Hokkaido.

Kino took to the meal like a fish to water. Stacked over her overflowing rice bowl was medium-rare lamb. Kino had a look of delight on her face. Her eyes sparkled.

Shizu elegantly reached for a piece of well-cooked bell pepper with his chopsticks. However--

"Hm?"

"What?"

He was soon locked in battle with Inuyama, who had also reached for the same piece. Their chopsticks took hold of opposite ends of the bell pepper.

Inuyama ceded possession of the piece with a smile.

"I thank you."

Shizu took the bell pepper to his plate and began eating. Inuyama watched for a moment, and spoke.

"It's definitely nice to be alive to enjoy a great meal like this."

"Yes. It is." Shizu answered coolly.

The fun party went on through the night. Bright voices echoed through the forest.

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"Oh... This isn't fair. Why don't I get to have some of that awesome food?"

Hermes' complaining also went on through the night.

Night.

The quiet house was illuminated by the stars. The sound of insects softly provided ambient noise.

Drrr! The front door slid open quietly. Exiting was the white-haired Inuyama. He was dressed not in a yukata, but in plain clothes.

"Are you leaving so soon?"

Grandma asked softly from the doorway, scaring Inuyama. However, he put a smile on his face, turned around to face Grandma, and answered "Yes".

"That's a shame. Feel free to come back anytime."

"Thank you. Thank you for your hospitality."

Inuyama bowed politely and asked one thing before he left.

"Who won the challenge? Me, or Shizu-senpai?"

Night.

The quiet house was illuminated by the stars. The sound of insects softly provided ambient noise.



GAKUEN KINO

Drrr! The front door slid open quietly. Exiting was the katana-holding Shizu-senpai. He was dressed not in a yukata, but in plain clothes.

"Are you leaving so soon?"

Grandma asked softly from beside the fridge, scaring Shizu. However, he put a smile on his face, turned around to face Grandma, and answered "Yes".

"That's a shame. Feel free to come back anytime."

"Thank you. Thank you for your hospitality."

Shizu bowed politely and asked one thing before he left.

"Who won the challenge? Me, or Inuyama?"

In both cases, the old woman's answer was identical. She widened her eyes happily and said--

"Both of you."

What she said after was also the same for both.

"I'd love nothing more than to have either one of you marry my granddaughter."

Inuyama and Shizu also gave identical answers.

"Someone like me is not yet worthy. If you'll excuse me."

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And they each silently disappeared into the darkness.

The next morning, Kino awoke to the feeling of murderous bloodlust.

"Oh!"

The moment she sat up, *ratatatatat!* Rubber bullets showered the place Kino was lying on just a moment ago. Kino, still in her PJs, tossed her blanket in the air to block her enemy's line of sight, took proper hold of the revolver she took with her last night, and pulled the trigger mercilessly. *Ratatatat!* The bullets left through the empty doorway, flew into the halls, and bounced off the wall.

When the gunshots stopped and the blanket fell to the floor--

"That's enough." said Grandma, as she came in from the hallway. She was also holding a smoking revolver.

"Good morning, Grandma!"

"Good morning, Kino."

It was a morning like any other.

"Huh? They both left?"

Kino was in her combat suit, holding a Barrett M82 Special Application Scoped Rifle in her right hand and a cartridge box in the other. The weather was wonderful today.



GAKUEN KINO

Grandma followed Kino, holding an M240B machine gun and a cartridge box.

"When?"

"Probably this morning. there was nothing but a note by the time I woke up this morning."

"What'd they say?"

"Thank you for your hospitality. I have an urgent errand to attend to, so please excuse me'."

"Tch. They're both so tactless."

Kino was a bit upset. But she cheered herself up with the understanding that she would be able to enjoy a normal summer break now with both of them gone.

"Oh well."

Kino looked back happily, and saw Grandma smiling at her.

"Huh...?"

Kino tilted her head.

"What's the matter?"

"Hm? Something..."

"Something?"

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"No, never mind. I met someone yesterday who looked kinda like you."

"Oh? Who was this person?"

"N-never mind! It can't be. It must have been my imagination. Yeah."

"Is that so?"

Kino and Grandma arrived at the firing range. Grandma placed the M240B on the table, took out the ammunition belt, and prepared to fire. Kino also unfolded the Barrett's bipod.

"What kind of a person was she?"

Kino answered honestly.

"Well... she was really strong..."

Kino continued with a "but".

"But?"

"But she was so strong and nice that she didn't seem like someone who could possibly be real. Maybe..."

"Maybe?"

"Maybe... she's a legendary ghost who protects the Earth from evil."

Rat!



GAKUEN KINO

Grandma began firing away like a terrified madwoman.

"DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT GHOSTS!"

Kino, crouched on the ground, tried to stop her rampaging Grandma.

"Kyaaa! Grandma, calm down!"

"I don't believe this." Hermes muttered, dumbfounded.

Kino's summer break had only just begun.